GOLDEN DEEDS OF INDIA

TURNBULL

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HARSHA RESCUES RAJYASHRI

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BY

L. AND H. G. D. TURNBULL

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DEDICATION

To the Girls and Boys of India

1. Some of you may have had to write an essay on Courage, and your teacher may have tried to help you to write some headings, such as these: Definition of Courage, Types of Courage, Physical Courage, Moral Courage, Examples, Conclusion.

How easy it all sounds! And yet, is it so easy? Over two thousand years ago the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who has been called 'the master of those who know', tried to arrive at a definition of Courage. And this is how he set to work: 'Courage is a middle state between fearing and daring; not all kinds of fearing, but only the worst kind, that is, fear of death; and not all kinds of death, but only death in the noblest circumstances, that is, death in battle'.

2. Well, this, too, sounds quite simple and logical; and it was natural enough for a Greek, brought up on the heroic memories of the life and death struggle against Persia, and chosen to be the tutor of Alexander the Great, to acclaim the courage of the warrior as the highest type of courage. And when the rod of Empire passed from Greece to Rome, the Roman poets and philosophers found nothing better to suggest. For Rome, too, had passed through a life and death struggle, against Carthage. You remember those simple and stirring lines from Macaulay's *Horatius*:

> 'For how can man die better
> Than facing fearful odds,
> For the ashes of his fathers
> And the temples of his gods?'

and can we, who live in the shadow of the Great World War, dare to belittle the courage of those millions of men, who went forth from every town and village in every part of the British Empire to fight and to die, if need be, so that

honour and justice and freedom might not perish from the earth? The German Emperor tried to belittle our soldiers by calling them 'mercenaries', and this is the crushing reply, from the pen of an English scholar and poet, which appeared early in the War in the columns of the English *Times*:

> 'These, in the days when Heaven was falling,
> The hour when Earth's foundations fled,
> Followed their mercenary calling
> And took their wages and are dead.
> Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
> They stood, and Earth's foundations stay;
> What God abandoned these defended
> And saved the sum of things—for pay.'

No, we cannot belittle the courage of the fighting man. The very words used for 'courage', both in Greek and Latin, simply mean 'the quality of being a man' (*andria* in Greek; *virtus* in Latin). And we have taken this word *virtus* into English, and made it into 'virtue', thus showing that courage is the most precious virtue a man can possess.

3. And yet some of you must feel rather puzzled. You will perhaps say, 'This is all very well, but there is not always a world war going on, nor can everybody be a soldier. And so there are thousands of people (girls and boys and women, for example) who can never get a chance of showing this highest form of courage.'

But here you are mistaken; for there *is* always a world war going on, not against flesh and blood, but against all the forces of evil in our daily lives, against unfairness, uncleanness, cruelty; against envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. And in this great battle you can all win a Victoria Cross for valour. And it is with the hope of strengthening your courage for this great fight that these stories have been collected for you. They are all true stories, and they tell of the bravery of your countrymen, not only in the past but in the present. The heroes of this book are not all soldiers, or grown-up men, but some are women and some are boys. If you consider these stories closely you will find there is a golden thread running through them all, which makes each deed into a golden deed, into

a deed of the highest courage. And the name of that thread is 'self-sacrifice'.

4. Now this, you may say, is hard to understand; so let us dwell on it a little longer. First of all, do not imagine that the people in this book were all specially brave, and totally devoid of fear. Some of them were quite ordinary people, and you may be sure they felt fear. But what made them brave was that they conquered this fear, and they conquered it not from base motives, such as the hope of a reward or the thought of what people might think if they proved cowards, but simply because, like good soldiers, they obeyed the voice of their commander, that highest part of a man which distinguishes him from the beasts and makes him into a god, and which we call the soul. To them the following noble lines from a modern poet would not have been addressed in vain:

> 'When round thy ship in tempest Hell appears,
> And every spectre mutters up more dire
> To snatch control
> And loose to madness thy deep-kennell'd Fears—
> Then to the helm, O soul!'

The highest command which the soul imposes on us is simply this: 'Love all men'. If we have this love, it is an easy thing to be brave, for, as the Bible says, 'Perfect love casts out fear'. And how else can we show this love except by a life of devotion, renunciation, self-sacrifice? This is the truest courage, and it is within the reach of all.

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I

A DEDICATED LIFE

In his discourse on 'King's Treasuries', in Sesame and Lilies, *Ruskin tells us how often in the past kings have pursued merely material and unworthy aims. In his picturesque way he describes how they have laid up treasures for the moths to eat, for the rust to consume, or for the robber to seize. The fine and costly robe has perished, the helmet and sword have been dimmed, the jewels and the gold have been scattered. Some day, perhaps, he says, there will arise an order of true kings, who will gather the treasures of Wisdom for their people.*

Had Ruskin read the story of Asoka, he would perhaps have said that once in ancient India there was a true king, who followed the law of wisdom and piety himself and strove to lead his people along the same path. If ever there was a golden age in India, an era of peace unbroken by domestic feud or by the fierce invader from the north, it was during the long and beneficent rule of Asoka.

ASOKA ruled for forty years, from 272 to 231 B.C., over the whole of India except the south of the peninsula, and throughout the length and breadth of this vast territory the good Emperor breathed into the administration the spirit of piety, kindness, and tolerance.

The great Mauryan Empire, of which Asoka was by far the noblest ruler, had been founded by his grandfather, Chandragupta. He was a man of strong will and of stern nature, who could be cruel when he thought it necessary, and he enlarged his kingdom of Magadha (or Behar)

till he made himself master of the whole of Northern India and even of Afghanistan.

King Seleucus of Syria, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, and a successor to part of his Empire, thought to revive the conquests of his mighty commander, and crossed the Indus for that purpose. But he could make no headway against Chandragupta. When he saw that there was no hope of again conquering the Punjab, he abandoned all his claims and made an alliance with his Hindu rival.

We may think of Chandragupta as a man not unlike William the Conqueror in English history, ruling much more by fear than by love, and hammering his kingdom into unity with no gentle hand.

Of his son Bindusara, who succeeded him, we know little; it is in Bindusara's son, Asoka, that the main interest of the Mauryan dynasty lies.

Not only was Asoka the man who, more than anyone else, made Buddhism one of the great religions of the world; not only did he try to apply the law of *dharma* (or piety) to the government of his realm in a way that no other great ruler has done in an equal degree; but he is also an example of that dedicated life which in itself is a golden deed.

We must not look in his story for feats of arms, for after his conversion he was a man of peace. We must not expect romantic adventures or daring deeds, we must fix our gaze on what is less picturesque, but at least as difficult and far rarer, the daily employment of supreme power by

a ruler to ease the suffering and uplift the souls of his fellow-men.

Round the name of Asoka there has gathered a mass of legend such as has gathered round that of Charlemagne and even of Napoleon, but we have in his inscriptions his own records of himself, and his large simple nature stands out clearly revealed.

Twelve years after his accession he entered upon his first and his last aggressive military campaign. Along the Bay of Bengal, between the Mahanadi and the Godavari, in what is now the northern part of the Madras Presidency, lay the kingdom of Kalinga. This kingdom was conquered and annexed by Asoka.

Nobody in modern times has seen the horrors of war in India with his own eyes; but those who saw or have read what happened to Belgium and Poland in the Great War may form some picture of what happened in Kalinga. Asoka himself tells us that 150,000 people were made captive, 100,000 were killed, and many more perished miserably from famine, pestilence, and hardship. We can picture the burnt homesteads, the ruined crops, the untilled fields, and the grief of those who had lost their fathers, their brothers, or their sons, or had seen the weak and the defenceless maltreated before their eyes. The sight of such things in the Great War made many a man resolved to do what he could to make another great war impossible. It at once pierced Asoka to the heart, and roused in him, as he says himself, feelings of 'remorse, profound sorrow, and

regret'. 'The nobler a soul is, the more objects of compassion it hath,' is a fine saying of Bacon; its truth is shown in Asoka.

It is likely that Asoka's compassion for suffering and his determination not to increase the woes of men by waging war were strengthened by his conversion to Buddhism, which dates from about this time. Buddhism teaches men to think of others before themselves, and to try to alleviate the sufferings of the world. It was in Asoka's own kingdom of Magadha that Gautama Buddha, nearly 300 years before, had preached his doctrine; it was fitting that a ruler of Magadha should now make the moral law of Buddha into the law of the State, and should send the yellow-robed missionaries to preach far and wide throughout the East.

Hitherto numerous animals had been slaughtered for the royal tables. 'Now,' says Asoka, 'they have been reduced to three, namely, two peacocks and one deer': and shortly afterwards even this moderate allowance was done away with. In a similar spirit the pleasures of the chase were renounced, and instead of the royal hunt Asoka instituted royal progresses or tours, during which preaching was encouraged and largess was given to holy men.

Reverence to parents and elders and truthfulness were also insisted upon by this pious ruler. One of the numerous Edicts which he had engraved on rocks sets forth these moral duties. 'Thus saith His Majesty: father and mother must be obeyed; respect for living creatures

must be enforced; truth must be spoken. These are the virtues of the law of piety which must be practised. Similarly, the teacher must be reverenced by the pupil, and proper courtesy must be shown to relations. This is the ancient standard of piety—this leads to length of days, and according to this men must act.' Such teaching is curiously like the ancient Jewish and Christian commandment, 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land that the Lord thy God has given thee.'

Three developments which we are apt to associate with modern 'progress' were anticipated by Asoka—the practice of religious toleration, the institution of hospitals, and the kindly treatment of outcastes.

'No one,' he said, 'should exalt his own creed or disparage that of his neighbour beyond reason. . . . All religions deserve respect on some ground'; and he goes on to say that a man who abuses his neighbour's creed is really damaging his own.

As to hospitals, one of his Rock Edicts informs us that hospitals of two kinds, for men and for animals, were established throughout the Empire, and that medicinal herbs and drugs were planted or imported.

Lastly, he declares that he looks with a kindly eye upon the jungle-folk of his domain; the officers of government are to assure these poor people that they should trust the King without fear, and that his only wish is to make them happy. They are to regard him as their father.

It is as the good father of his people that we still think of Asoka, and he himself tells us how he toiled for the common weal, and how ready he was to listen to any petition, whether he was at dinner, or in the harem, or in bed. Yet, like many hard workers with a high ideal before them, he felt that there was always something more to be done. 'I am never,' he says, 'completely satisfied with my exertions.'

Such was the teaching and the practice of this remarkable man, the expression in word and deed of the lofty doctrine of *dharma*. His Edicts, engraved on rocks and pillars throughout his wide domain, in order to remind his people of the moral law, have been found from beyond Peshawar to Orissa and Mysore. In the Bombay Presidency there is one at Sapara in the Thana district, and another on the Girnar Hill near Junagadh. They are all composed in some dialect of Prakrit, the vernacular akin to literary Sanskrit and to the Pali of the Buddhist scriptures of Ceylon.

In European history there is no exact parallel to Asoka. He reminds us, however, by turns, of the good Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and of the English Alfred. Though he had not, like Alfred, to contend against a cruel and aggressive enemy, and was free from pressing military problems, he recalls the great Saxon in his strenuous toil for the good of his people and his efforts to save their souls as well as their bodies.

Such a life is one long golden deed.

II

A PRINCE OF BROTHERS

About a hundred miles to the north of Delhi stands the ancient town of Thanesar, a place famous in many a page of India's story.

The area round it is to the Hindus holy ground, for upon it was fought the great battle of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, which is the theme of that noble epic the Mahabharata. On the occasion of an eclipse of the moon thousands of pilgrims visit Thanesar to bathe in the Brahmasar Tank, the waters of which are credited with virtues of holiness greater than those of all other tanks.

Other important battles were fought near Thanesar, amongst them being that in which Prithvi Raja defeated Shahab-ud-din Ghori. Later he was himself defeated by Ghori in the same place.

Harshavardhana, known also as Siladitya, ruled Thanesar and conquered Northern India in the seventh century. During his reign the famous Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hein and Hiuen Tsang, came to India, and Bana, the celebrated author, was King Harsha's close friend, and composed the Harshacharita to celebrate the deeds of his illustrious patron. King Harsha died in or about A.D. 647, after a long and prosperous reign.

PRABHAKARA-VARDHANA, a rajah of Gupta lineage, ruled over Thanesar. A man of strong and energetic character, a brave warrior and wise statesman, he had subdued the neighbouring kings and defeated the dreaded Huns in various engagements.

His rani, a princess of noble birth and great beauty, had borne him three children—two sons and a daughter.

The eldest of these, Rajya-Vardhana, was a boy of serious nature, who spent most of his time in reading; but the second boy, Harsha, was both high-spirited and ambitious, more like his father, who saw in him a true scion of the fighting Gupta stock and took great pride in his boyish feats of strength.

The daughter, Princess Rajyashri, was gifted in many ways. It is told of her that at an early age she understood and was well versed in the holy books; she could sing, and play on various musical instruments; and had withal such a charming and merry nature that everyone loved her.

The two princes, her brothers, were very devoted to her, and between Harsha and his little sister there existed such a close tie of affection and understanding that the two were quite unhappy when parted.

The years went by, and Princess Rajyashri was sought in marriage by Grahavarman, king of Kanauj, and as her parents favoured his suit, the nuptials were celebrated with great magnificence.

The farewell between the bride and her dearly loved younger brother was tender and sorrowful, for it meant the end of their happy childhood days.

When his daughter had left Thanesar with her husband, the rajah called his eldest son to him and said, 'You are now of an age to wear armour and march forth against my enemies. I have ordered that ten thousand of my finest

troops, under the most experienced and doughty of my captains, follow you in an expedition against the Huns.'

Now Rajya-Vardhana had little taste for fighting, his real wish being to spend his life in meditation and study ; still he was a king's son and trained in the art of war, so he set forth at the head of a vast cavalcade composed of the flower of his father's soldiery.

Hundreds of fighting elephants accompanied the force, and behind, so that he might get a taste of war experience without having any responsibility of command, rode young Harsha at the head of his own troop of horse.

This was an expedition entirely after the heart of the lively boy, but he soon tired of pursuing the flying Huns, and left his brother to follow them up to the very slopes of the Himalayas, while he remained behind to hunt in the jungle, for in this place there abounded all kinds of large and small game.

After he had amused himself in this way for some days, slaying a great number of wild animals, the young prince began to think of returning home.

It was no use waiting for Rajya-Vardhana, who had pushed on with his troops and might be absent for many weeks ; so Harsha gave orders to his followers to prepare for an early return to Thanesar.

As he was resting prior to the long journey, there arrived a messenger who was so overcome by fatigue and distress that it was some time before he could clearly state his errand.

At last he was able to break to the anxious Harsha the sad news that the raja was dying from a deadly fever.

The young prince was devoted to his father, and he set off at once to Thanesar, scarcely waiting for an escort. Without taking either food or rest, he rode at full speed to the city. When he arrived there he found all was grief and confusion. The rajah was dying, and when his son reached his side he was only just able to murmur a few loving words of counsel, in which seemed to be expressed the wish that Harsha should succeed him.

The rani, overcome with grief, and following the custom of her house, became *sati*, and thus on his father's death Prince Harsha was left all alone, for the crown prince was far away on his military mission and Princess Rajyashri was in Kanauj at the court of her husband.

Directly the funeral ceremonies for the deceased rajah were over, the ministers came to Prince Harsha and offered to set him upon the throne, but with great loyalty he refused to usurp his brother's position.

It was some time before Rajya-Vardhana arrived at Thanesar, and when he did so, he was so cast down by grief that for some time he was unable to do anything but weep, reproaching himself with the thought that he had arrived too late to claim his father's blessing, too late to bid his mother farewell.

When he became calmer he drew Harsha aside, and told him what was in his mind about the succession.

'It has long been known to me,' he said gravely, 'that our wise and noble father wished that you should succeed him. He was a man of clear judgment and a good reader of character. He had seen that I had no taste for the responsibilities of kingship, that I would far rather be an ascetic, owning neither power nor wealth; but in you he saw the makings of the good ruler; energy and ambition are written in every line of your face.' Then, drawing his sword and casting it from him, he continued, 'I herewith abandon the sword, and to you, Harsha, I offer the empire which our noble father built up and ruled so fearlessly and wisely'.

When Harsha heard his brother's words he hung his head in shame and distress, for he feared that Rajya-Vardhana might have learned how the succession had already been offered to the younger prince.

Speaking in a low and trembling voice he said, 'Do not be angry with me, dearest brother. It is true that they asked me to be king, but I spurned the thought; my only wish was that you should come, and that I might serve you.'

Rajya-Vardhana, much touched by his brother's loyalty, said, 'Nay, Harsha, I never doubted you or your love, but it is even as I say. I have no heart for kingship. Take the gift of the throne from me, and my love and blessing be with you.'

A silence fell upon the brothers, for both were too deeply moved to talk more on the matter. Their sorrowful reverie was broken in upon by a

loud tumult in the courtyard below. Springing to his feet, Rajya-Vardhana snatched up the sword he had so shortly before cast from him, and both he and Harsha awaited with stern countenances the reason of the disturbance.

Without ceremony there broke into the chamber an envoy from the Court of Kanauj. 'Alas! alas!' he cried, 'I bring sad and terrible tidings. The brave, the noble Grahavarman has been vilely murdered by his enemy, the wicked lord of Malwa. Not content with this horrible deed, he has made Queen Rajyashri a prisoner, confined like any brigand's wife, her delicate hands and feet bound with iron fetters!'

Astounded by the news of these horrors, the brothers stood as if turned to stone. For an instant only, and then Rajya-Vardhana, with a low sound of rage, sprang to action. 'I go to avenge my sister's wrongs, and to cut down the miserable assassin who spilt the blood of the noble Grahavarman,' he said sternly. 'And I follow you,' said Harsha, his young heart burning with the spirit of revenge.

'Nay, not so,' replied his brother in a voice of authority. One of my father's sons must guard the throne. Remain here, Harsha, and if I do not return, carry on the tradition of our house.'

This was hard counsel for the boy, whose heart was aching in sympathy for a beloved sister, and who longed to accompany his brother to avenge her wrongs. But the habit of obedience to authority was strong in this descendant of the

Guptas, and he mutely bowed his head to Rajya-Vardhana's decree.

Once more the army set forth from Thanesar, led by the prince, and soon news came of a great battle in which his forces had fallen upon and completely routed the Malwa foe, taking great numbers of prisoners and a vast amount of booty.

The people of Thanesar, cheered by news of the victory, made ready to acclaim the victor, but misfortune had still another stone in her sling. Hard upon the good news came black tidings. Harsha, eager to greet his valiant brother, saw only Rajya-Vardhana's chief of staff approaching, followed by a dejected company. 'What fresh misfortune is this?' cried the prince. 'Miserable that I am to bring such ill news!' replied the messenger heavily. 'Our gracious King Rajya-Vardhana, having set his foot upon the neck of his enemy, was done to death by the King of Gauda, even as he met him in friendly conference, never suspecting the dagger that lurked beneath the traitor's robe.'

'And my sister, Queen Rajyashri, what of her?' demanded Harsha, his face dark with grief and the rage that scorched his heart.

'Would that I had died before I brought these tidings!' replied the officer. 'Your sister has escaped from the dungeon in which she was held captive by the King of Malwa, and has fled to the fastnesses of the Vindhyan jungles.'

'And who went with her?' demanded Harsha. 'Were there no sturdy archers of my brother's train to protect her from fresh affronts and from

attack by wild beasts that abound in those forests?'

'The noble lady made her escape alone, save for a few of her women and a little creature, a dwarf, who had been the jester at the court of the king, her dead husband,' answered the chief of staff, averting his gaze from the contempt he saw in the king's face.

Then was the rage of Harsha terrible to behold. Striding from the audience chamber, he took his way through the frightened servants, who fled before the anger of his look. Was this man of wrath the sorrowing boy who had wept upon Rajya-Vardhana's bosom? Was this the gay, the care-free prince that had played with little Rajyashri in the palace gardens?

Summoning Skandagupta, the captain of the elephants, a man of powerful frame and hero of many a bloody fight, he bade him make ready for war, saying in a terrible voice, 'I go to extirpate the King of Gauda, to free the earth of that vile craven who dared to cut off the glorious life of the noble Rajya-Vardhana'.

At once all was bustle in the preparation for war, and at dawn the subjects of the Lord of Thanesar were aroused from their slumbers by the sound of the conch and the tread of thousands of soldiers.

At the head of the vast army rode the young king, the royal umbrella waving over his head, his face dark with the heaviness of his thoughts. And so King Harsha went forth to chasten his enemy and to rescue his sister.

When the army had been on the march for some time without rest for man or beast, the king gave the order that a halt should be made.

As he reclined on a couch, a prey to sadness, a letter was brought to him from his cousin Bhandi, who, with the whole of the King of Malwa's force, was encamped at hand. Harsha, longing for the companionship of one to whom he could unburden his heart, commanded that Bhandi should at once be summoned to his presence.

Soon, almost alone, the young man came riding to the king's camp, and, dismounting from his horse, entered the royal tent.

With a cry he fell at Harsha's feet, but the young king raised him up and embraced him, asking the while for news of his beloved sister.

'Your Majesty,' said Bhandi sorrowfully, 'Kanauj is in the hands of the King of Gauda, and you must advance with all speed and annihilate the usurper.' 'But Queen Rajyashri?' demanded the king impatiently. 'What care I for the fate of Kanauj, when that of my sister is unknown to me?'

'She had fled before my arrival,' said Bhandi; 'I immediately sent searchers, but without avail, for the fastnesses of the Vindhyas have concealed the queen, and all my people have returned without news of her.'

'Your people! and what of your people who let her go with no escort save a handful of her women and one poor dwarf?' answered the king bitterly. 'No, my good Bhandi, the punishment

of a few petty chiefs may wait. I myself will go in search of Rajyashri; and if I have to cut my way through the jungle alone, yet will I find her or die in the attempt.' Then, his anger deserting him, he turned to Bhandi a face of boyish grief, saying brokenly, 'O my dear cousin, you alone of living men know what my sister is to me. Do you remember the happy days when we all played together as children. Gone from me are my noble parents, my dear brother; shall I delay when Rajyashri may even now be on the point of death?' With these words the king retired to his private apartment, and Bhandi left the royal tent to rest after his long march.

The next day King Harsha inspected the captive Malwa army and the booty which had fallen to the power of Rajya-Vardhana; then, leaving the disposal of everything to his captains, he set out with a small body of horse in search of Queen Rajyashri.

After a few days' march he reached the borders of the Vindhya forests and encamped for the night in a small village. Early next morning he entered the forest, and for many days wandered about in the hope of coming upon some trace of his sister. With no guide the task seemed hopeless, for she might be quite near or miles away for all he knew.

When the king's heart was sick with hope deferred, he chanced to meet a young hunter with whom he entered into conversation. He learnt that he was son of the Lord of the Vindhya range and familiar with every path and bypath of the forest.

'Good sir,' said the king, 'I am fortunate in meeting one who knows this noble forest so well, for it may be that you can help me. Tell me, have you in your wanderings met with a lady and a small company of female attendants? I seek Queen Rajyashri, who has fled from the vengeance of the Gauda king.'

Then the young man bowed low and answered respectfully, 'Sire, it is my misfortune that I cannot help you or give you tidings of her you seek, but there lives in the forest a devotee of Buddha, who spends his life in holy meditation. It may be that he or one of his disciples has news of this unhappy lady.'

'Lead me to the holy man,' commanded the king, his heart bounding with renewed hope.

Together they proceeded in the direction of the mendicant's dwelling, followed by King Harsha's troop of cavalry, who were lost in wonder at the adventure in which they found themselves engaged.

Suddenly the keen eye of the king caught the gleam of a red robe shining through the trees, and, dismounting, he washed his mouth in the waters of a stream. Commanding his followers to await his return, he went forward unaccompanied, save for his guide, and quickly came into the presence of the holy man.

Having offered a respectful greeting to the ascetic, the king declared his errand. 'Great is my need of tidings,' he said, 'for my sister may at any moment be attacked by wild beasts, trampled by elephants, or die from one of the

many privations which she must be enduring in this wild place.'

Even while he spoke these words, an aged disciple of the ascetic came up in great distress, and, folding his hands before his Guru, said, 'O my master, such sad tidings I bring! A young and beautiful lady is at this moment mounting the funeral pyre, her last refuge in a grievous extremity. May I beg of you to hasten to her so that you may succour her with your holy counsel?' It is she, Queen Rajyashri!' exclaimed King Harsha, hardly able to contain the emotion which swept over him at the news of his sister's imminent sacrifice. 'Alas that she should find herself so bereft of all hope that she contemplates death! Lead on, holy sir; my heart tells me that there is no time to waste.' As he spoke, the anxious brother sprang up, eager to depart.

Willingly the good old mendicant went forward as his guide, and the king, followed by the holy man's disciples and the royal escort, hastened forward to the rescue of the young queen.

From afar off the anxious brother caught the sound of women's voice raised in lamentation, and quickened his strides until he burst upon the astonished gaze of Rajyashri's women, who were gathered round the pyre and filling the air with their pitiful cries.

'O queen!' cried one, immediately recognising the agitated Harsha. 'Look up, dear lady; your royal brother has come to your aid.'

Running towards his sister, oblivious of all but her suffering, the young king raised her

tenderly, speaking to her in those reassuring tones with which he had been wont to soothe her childish fears. Drawing her further away from the scorching flames, which licked the dry wood of the pyre as if angry at the escape of their prey, he let her weep her fill, supported by his strong and loving embrace.

When she was calmer she tried to express her gratitude to him for his timely rescue, but words failed her, and she could only gaze at him as if the very sight of his face spelled safety and security.

For some days the royal pair rested in the forest, soothed and cheered by the discourse of the holy man; then, bidding him an affectionate farewell and gaining his promise that he would become their guest at some early time, they rode away, followed by their delighted escort.

Later they met the faithful Bhandi, and together they made all haste to Thanesar, where they were received by the subjects of the young king with deep rejoicing.

Long and glorious was the reign of Harsha, King of Kanauj and Lord of Northern India, and rightly is his era called the Golden Age, but surely no act of his wise and triumphant life more deserved the admiration of succeeding generations than his tender devotion and chivalry to the sister whom he loved.

III

A PRINCESS OF MEWAR

There are few who have not heard some of the stories of heroism and tragedy that cluster round the great fortress of Chitor.

Those who have alighted at Chitorgarh station will remember the steep rocky hill, three miles long and five hundred feet high, crowned by the wonderful fort. In olden days it was the capital of Mewar, and the city was contained within the fort.

ON the shores of a lake stands a stately palace, its noble walls reflected in the blue waters. Alone among the ancient palaces and temples of Chitor it has escaped ruin, for when Alau-ddin Khilji, the Tartar sultan of Delhi, sacked the famous city of the Rajputs, even his ruthless hand spared the building where Padmani the beautifui, Padmani, princess of Ceylon and consort of Rana Bhim Singh, had come as a bride, and from which she went to meet death rather than sully the honour of her lord.

The bards of the period write that words fail to express the loveliness of Padmani's face and form, that no star was as bright as her dark eyes, no rose petal as delicate as the bloom of her cheek; her lips were redder than the juice of the pomegranate, her teeth whiter than pearls, her tiny hands like lotus buds. And this flower of womanhood was as good as she was beautiful, an example of all the female virtues.

Alau-ddin sat within his palace at Delhi and brooded day and night on the beauty of Padmani. Wives he had whose charms had been wont to delight him, wives whose one hope was a look of favour from their lord, but he was weary of them. What were their attractions compared to those of the peerless Chohan princess?

Twice he had demanded that she should be sent to him at Delhi, offering to withdraw his troops from under the walls of Chitor if he might possess its most treasured jewel; but, pressed as the Rajput defenders were, they would rather have died a hundred deaths than surrender their princess, the very thought of whom nerved their arms and enabled them to resist the merciless attack of the invaders.

Meantime Padmani passed the days with her maidens, all of them Rajput women of high rank. She read with them from the sacred books, or listened to their songs that told of Rajput valour and chivalry. Sometimes she would walk alone on the battlements of her palace, or descend the steps that led to the lake, where her own lovely self was reflected in the water. At other times she would stand upon the highest pinnacle of her palace and gaze across the plains of Mewar towards the distant hills. There were times when sad and terrifying thoughts would fill her heart. She could see in imagination those grassy plains red with the blood of brave Rajput chiefs, and hear the wild victorious shouts of Alau-ddin's advancing army. Then her little hands would clench and her glorious eyes flash, for she knew

that the Tartar barbarian would never take the wife of Rana Bhim Singh alive.

At length, wearied with longing for a sight of the most beautiful woman in India, the proud Alau-ddin sent word to Rana Bhim Singh that he would withdraw his troops if he might be permitted a sight of Padmani, and, so that her delicacy might not be affronted, he was willing to satisfy his desire by gazing on her reflection in a mirror. This seemed so humble a request that the rana assented to it with courteous readiness, and, to disarm all suspicion, Alau-ddin entered Chitor with only a few guards. For a few seconds he feasted his eyes on the beautiful reflected face of the princess; then, expressing himself as honoured and delighted by the sight, proceeded to take his leave of Rana Bhim Singh with many protestations of friendship. The Rajput, not to be outdone in chivalry, accompanied his guest to the foot of the fortress. All the time, as they went, Alau-ddin continued to make his host the most complimentary speeches; under cover of these he contrived to make a sign on which a troop of his own men sprang from where they were in hiding, and, before the astonished rana could draw his sword in self-defence, he was overpowered and hurried away to the Tartar sultan's camp.

Well satisfied with the result of his treacherous ruse, Alau-ddin sent a letter to Padmani, in which he informed her that if she wished to obtain her husband's release she could do so by coming to the Tartar camp as hostage.

When Padmani received this insolent message, her heart grew hot with anger, and she vowed that she would revenge the insult to herself and the treachery to her lord.

There had accompanied her from Ceylon her uncle, Gorah, and his nephew, a youth of twelve years old, both Rajputs of the Chohan clan and chiefs on whose fidelity the princess could rely so long as their lives lasted.

Summoning them to her presence she took counsel with them as to the best means of foiling the Tartar sultan and at the same time rescuing Rana Bhim Singh.

Now Padmani was as wise as she was beautiful, and her quick brain devised a scheme for which her kinsmen expressed great admiration, so clever was it and yet sufficiently simple to carry into immediate execution.

A very short time after the arrival of Alau-ddin's letter a reply from the princess of Chitor went to his camp. In it the princess expressed herself willing to accede to his demands, on condition that she might ride to Delhi in a way befitting her exalted rank, accompanied by all the noble maidens who formed her train.

When Alau-ddin found that the lovely Padmani accepted his own uncompromising demand, he was filled with delight. He had quite expected her to make the price of honour a heavy one, but all she asked was the gratification of a little feminine vanity. Never had a conquest so delighted him, never had his stern heart beat so high; and he planned, once the princess was

safe at Delhi, to march in force on Chitor and overthrow finally the Rajput supremacy.

He straightway sent answer to the princess that she might maintain as fine a retinue as was at her command, and that he would ensure her a right royal welcome on arrival at his camp.

When Padmani read the words of the infatuated sultan a strange smile played over her beautiful face, and she immediately gave orders that seven hundred litters should be prepared to accompany her to Delhi. In accordance with Rajput tradition the greatest care was to be observed that no violation of feminine delicacy might occur on the journey, and the strictest commands were issued to this effect.

But instead of dainty maidens, seven hundred of the bravest warriors of Mewar left Chitor, concealed in the heavily curtained litters, each of which was borne by six armed soldiers disguised as bearers. Padmani herself remained in her palace in strict seclusion. This secret was known only to a faithful few. The multitude thought that the gorgeous litter, heavily decorated with gold and set in the centre of the others, contained the Chohan beauty, and many loyal hearts grieved that their princess had proved so frail. No suspicion entered the mind of Alau-ddin as the glittering procession wended its way towards his camp. 'The bird is caught,' he said to himself. 'Once I have my heart's desire, we will see whether or no the Rajput gets back to Chitor!'

The walls of the Tartar camp were made of thick cloth, and outside these the cavalcade drew up. When Alau-ddin enquired the reason of the delay, he was given a message from his fair hostage in which she craved his permission to bid farewell for ever to her lord. This boon was granted her and Rana Bhim Singh was permitted to enter her litter; half an hour was fixed as the limit of the interview. The half hour passed; and another. Alau-ddin grew jealous, and sent a peremptory message to Padmani to appear at once before him.

The answer to this was a shout from the guard; the litter and the princess were not to be found, for Rana Bhim Singh had escaped under cover of the supposed interview, and was half way to Chitor on one of the fleetest horses in Mewar.

When Alau-ddin realised that he had been tricked, and by a woman's wit, his rage knew no bounds. Pursuit was at once ordered, and the Rajputs, who attempted to cover the retreat of their chief, were slain almost to a man. The pursuers were soon hard on the tracks of the fleeing Rana Bhim Singh. On! On! Chitor is in sight with its gallant defenders. Padmani, the brave and faithful, awaits her lord in the palace by the lake; nearer come the shouts of the Tartar hordes, but the goal is reached in safety, and the gates of the fortress flung to, in the very teeth of Alau-ddin's soldiers.

Then began a fight in which each side sought victory or death, and the slopes of Chitor ran red

with the blood of Rajput and Tartar. The choicest of the heroes of Mewar met the assault, led by the gallant chiefs Gorah and Badul. Time after time the Rajput forces repelled the violence of the attack, for, though outnumbered ten to one, they fought for the honour of their sweet princess, and, to save her from worse than death, they achieved incredible feats of valour. Before nightfall the walls were piled with dead and dying, but the hosts of Alau-ddin were exhausted, and withdrew their shattered remnants, leaving Chitor inviolate and the honour of its princess upheld.

But many a noble chief laid down his life that day, the gallant Chohan Gorah being amongst the slain. His young wife had watched the fray from a window of the palace, never flinching as she saw her lord cutting his way through the thickest of the fight. And when that proud figure fell, never to rise, she shed no tear, but sought out the young Badul, who lay sorely wounded and who had been carried into the palace. 'Tell me, O Badul,' she said gently, 'how fared my lord in the strife?' And the lad replied proudly, 'He was a reaper of the harvest of battle; I followed his steps as a humble gleaner of his sword. On the red field of honour he spread a carpet of the slain; with a barbarian prince for his pillow he laid him down, and sleeps surrounded by the foe.'

Then the Rajput widow kept back her tears and said, 'Tell me more of my dear lord', and the boy answered, 'How can I further describe his

deeds, when he left no foe to dread or admire him?'

Her heart glowing with love and pride, Gorah's wife waited but to bid a tender farewell to the wounded Badul, and then, calling out in clear tones, 'My lord will chide my delay', leapt into the flames.

Cheated of Padmani and foiled in his attempt to take Chitor, Alau-ddin had no rest night or day from the thought of revenge.

He still coveted the beautiful princess, and the possession of her seemed more desirable than ever. He assembled fresh hosts, but slowly and cautiously, and thirteen years had elapsed since Rana Bhim Singh had slipped through his hands, when he marched once more on Chitor.

The Rajput forces had never recovered from the mighty effort they had made to hold the fortress during Alau-ddin's previous attack, and now he kept bringing up fresh forces, which he threw so persistently against the defenders that eventually he gained a footing on the southern point of the hill. Eleven of the Rana's sons fell in turn. One alone remained to uphold the house of Mewar.

On the battlements of her palace stood Padmani watching the strife, and as the forces of Alau-ddin gained the hill she called the women round her and said: 'Yonder comes the Tartar; those among you who would rather meet death than dishonour come with me.' There was not one amongst those high-born ladies that held back. With heads held aloft, their faces radiant

with high resolve, they passed in solemn procession towards the entrance of a deep cave where the funeral pyre was lighted. And when their lords saw them go, they felt that the honour of Chitor was vindicated, and that even if the Tartar prince should sack the fortress he would have but an empty triumph.

One by one those noble Rajput women leapt into the flames, and not one cried out as the fire licked her tender limbs. The last of those sweet sacrifices was Padmani, and on her closed the mighty door of the death-chamber, protecting her for ever from the despoiler's power.

When Alau-ddin entered Chitor the smoke still issued from the tomb of the heroic Padmani, and there was not one of the invaders who dared to look into that solemn cavern. Around were strewn the corpses of countless Rajput chiefs, whose brave souls had sought Yama unafraid, and whose swords still dripped with the blood of the foe.

Enraged at his empty triumph, baulked of the desire which had lent value to his life, Alau-ddin gave orders for the spoilation and destruction of the beautiful palaces and holy temples of Chitor. He urged on the destroyers himself, moodily watching the carved gates and arches being hacked to pieces. But when the spoilers approached the palace of the fair Padmani he called on them to desist. Was it that some vision of her noble beauty passed before him, softening even his stern heart, and causing him to spare the abode that had sheltered her gracious presence?

Alone it stands untouched among the ruins, and the blue waters of the lake still reflect its stately walls; the setting sun still gilds its turrets as in the days when its beautiful mistress gazed across the plains of Mewar towards the distant hills.

IV

PUNNA, THE EMERALD

In Chitor, early in the sixteenth century A.D., Bikramajeet, son of the famous Rana Sanga, held court, surrounded by the highest nobles of his state.

By their loyalty and valour he had regained the throne of Mewar, which had been wrested from him by the Sultan of Gujarat, but he was quite devoid of gratitude, and even sought to humiliate the proud Rajput chiefs, so that their anger was kindled against him.

At last, on one occasion, when there was waiting by him the aged Keremchund of Ajmer, whose loyalty had been proved in many a battle, Rana Bikramajeet, forgetting the respect due to this honourable vassal, and being angered at some slight check to his will, struck the chief in front of the assembled court.

Rajput nobles at once rose like one man at this indignity, and, as they retired, the gallant Chondawat leader, Kanji, first noble of the state of Mewar, spoke thus, 'Hearken to me, brother chiefs! Hitherto we have had but the smell of the blossom, but now we shall be forced to eat the fruit'; and Keremchund of Ajmer added, 'Tomorrow its flavour will be known!' In this way they left the Rana, their hearts full of rage against him, their one idea to wipe out the insult to their order.

Closely they talked together, no word of their hidden councils reaching the ear of the insolent Bikramajeet, but before night had fallen they had sought out Bunbeer, the son of heroic Pirthi Raj, and offered to place him on the throne of Mewar.

As soon as they had persuaded him to accept their offer they proceeded first to depose the ruler who had so insulted them and shortly after to put him to death.

And so Bunbeer ascended the throne, supported by the nobles who rejoiced at the swift revenge they had taken against the overbearing and ungrateful Bikramajeet.

IN one of the rooms of the female palace lay sleeping the real heir to the throne of Mewar, the child Oody Singh, son of Rana Sanga and half-brother of the murdered Bikramajeet.

Now Bunbeer plotted in his mind to destroy the young prince. Calling some of the chiefs, he sought counsel from them. 'The child, Oody Singh,' he said, sleeps in the *rawula* and there are those who seek to place him on the throne, so that they may use his minority to obtain their own ends.'

The chiefs pondered over these words. They knew the danger of placing an infant on the throne, and the confusion into which the state might fall if an unscrupulous regent were appointed, so they one and all agreed to the immediate removal of the little prince. Accordingly they made plans to put him to death.

The mother of Oody Singh, the beautiful Princess Kurnavati, had led thirteen thousand Rajput ladies to the funeral pyre rather than submit to the Sultan of Gujarat, who besieged and captured Chitor three years before Bikramajeet came to the throne. Before she sought the flames, she called to her the child's nurse, a loyal Rajput woman, whose own child had been born on the same day as the little prince. Gently Princess Kurnavati laid her son in the nurse's arms, saying, 'Punna, I leave to you this sacred charge; see to it that no harm befalls your prince. For him is reserved the cushion of Mewar'.

With tears in her eyes the nurse promised to guard the prince even with her life or the life of

those most dear to her. Comforted by these assurances, the princess embraced her child, and, with heart at rest, went to her doom.

Punna, the faithful nurse, brought up Rana Sanga's son with her own. On the evening of the day on which Bunbeer was to be saluted as ruler of Mewar, she had fed the child with rice and milk and sung him to sleep with ballads of Rajput bravery. Her own babe sat on her knee; he too would soon be asleep. Suddenly wild screams were heard; Punna set down the boy and rushed to the cradle of the sleeping prince. Then one of the palace servants entered, with horror painted on his face. 'The Rana Bikramajeet is no more,' he gasped out. Punna knew too well that a crime had been committed, and a terrible fear seized her. 'The prince! We must hide him!' she whispered. 'One murder will lead to another; the heir of Rana Sanga must be saved.' 'But how?' asked the servant anxiously. 'There are enemies everywhere; not one man can I find who is loyal to the young prince.' 'I have thought of a way,' said Punna. Her face was pale, and tears fell from her eyes as she knelt beside her own son. 'My jewel, my little brave heart,' she said, 'to-night we will pretend you are a prince; see, you shall wear this cap and this girdle of pearls, even as the little Rana wears them; you shall lie in his silken bed and dream you are a Prince of Mewar!' The little boy laughed with glee, for he liked playing at being a rana. As his mother set the jewelled cap on his head and wound the girdle round him he said,

'And shall I waken from my dreams and still be a prince, my mother?' Then Punna answered sadly, 'You will waken as befits a loyal Rajput, my son.'

Then she aroused little Oody Singh and told him that he was going upon a journey, a beautiful journey on which he would see new and wonderful sights. 'And my playmate,' enquired the prince, 'will he come too?' 'Nay, my prince, he will remain here and guard your property', answered Punna, and Oody Singh felt satisfied.

But when the nurse's son heard that his mother was about to make a journey, he set up a wail, crying, 'Do not leave me, mother, take me with you also!' Then Punna spoke sternly to her boy, 'What is this, son of a Rajput warrior? Peace until I come again', and she lifted him into the silken bed where the young prince had lately slept, and sang in a low voice of the Rajput chiefs who had fought for their rana and gained Yama as their reward.

As his eyelids closed in sleep she bent over him for one moment in a passion of love and sorrow, and then, gathering up the little prince in her strong arms, she fled from the chamber by a secret passage, followed by the faithful servant.

When she had reached a dark part of the palace grounds she sought for and found a large fruit basket, and in this she placed the prince, telling him to lie very still. Then she covered him with flowers and leaves, and bade her companion bear the basket to a place outside the fort, where she would rejoin him as soon as possible.

Then she returned to the chamber where her son slept, and waited. In a few minutes the door was thrown open and Bunbeer entered and imperiously demanded the whereabouts of Prince Oody Singh. Unable to speak in her anguish, she pointed to the bed where her own child lay. The murderer went towards the bed and stooped over the sleeping boy. Marking the jewelled cap and girdle he uttered a cry of triumph, and plunged his dagger into the innocent heart. With a shriek of horror the wretched mother rushed to the bed and clasped the little corpse to her breast. Hearing her cries, the women of the palace came hurrying to the death chamber, and thinking that the last scion of Rana Sanga's line had perished, joined their wailing to hers.

Amid bitter grief the remains of the noble Punna's child were burnt. The brave woman only waited to consecrate the ashes of her child with her tears, and then, anxious to convey her royal charge to safety, hastened to rejoin the servant in whose care she had left him.

She found the servant anxiously awaiting her in the bed of a river, where he had hidden the basket and its precious burden; and together the faithful pair left Chitor behind them and set off to Deola. There Punna besought the raja, Sing Bao, to give the little prince a sanctuary, but although she pointed out that Oody Singh was the last hope of Rana Sanga's line, Sing Bao feared to undertake so dangerous a charge, and Punna had once more to set forth in search of a refuge for her prince. Attended by the

THE DOOR WAS THROWN OPEN AND BUNBEER ENTERED.

faithful servant, she reached Dongerpoor, but here, too, the chief feared what might befall him if he succoured the royal child. Though worn out by anxiety and fatigue, the dauntless Punna never once thought of failing in her trust, but pushed on in her quest for a protector for the little prince.

Taking a circuitous route through Edur, she traversed the trackless jungles of the Aravauli valleys. The sun scorched her by day and the cold chilled her by night, and she was often at a loss to obtain food for herself and the child. But she managed to make friends with the Bhils, the tribes who inhabited this wild country. From them she gained help and protection, and by this means gained Komulmer.

Obtaining an interview with the Governor of the State, a Jain called Asa Sah, whose calling was that of a merchant, she placed the little prince in his arms, saying solemnly, 'To your care I entrust your king; guard him well.' The governor was very much astonished, and not a little alarmed, for he feared the wrath of the powerful nobles who had set Bunbeer on the throne, but his mother, who was present, rebuked him for his fears. 'Fidelity counts not dangers', she said. 'He is the son of Sanga, the great, the noble Sanga, your master.'

Fired by these words, the governor resolved to protect the young prince, and for greater safety and to allay suspicion, he gave out that the boy was his nephew.

Then the faithful Punna, her duty discharged, bade farewell to the prince for whom she had

sacrificed her own dear son. 'I may not stay,' she said sadly, 'for the presence of a Rajputni about the person of Asa Sah's nephew would bring suspicion on the heir of Chitor.' And so she left her beloved prince and returned to her own country, there to await the day when he should ascend the throne of his fathers.

She lived to see her great hope realised, for she was able to establish the identity of the prince, when the nobles of Mewar, tired of the upstart Bunbeer, sought to establish the rightful heir as rana.

This is the story of Punna the Emerald, and over her ashes stands a beautiful tomb of rare marble carved by a master hand, a fitting monument to the bravery and devotion of this Rajput woman, who added another link to India's chain of Golden Deeds.

V

THE LOYAL CHIEF

At Hampi, on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra, about ten miles from Hospet station, lie the great ruins of the chief city of the kings of Vijayanagar, who established their empire in A.D. 1336.

Here in the year 1564 ruled Raya Ramaraja, whose pride was so great that though his kingdom was menaced by the Mahomedan Sultans of Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golkonda, and Bidar, he treated their threats with haughty contempt and dared them to do their worst.

In December, 1564, their united armies marched south; about a month later was fought the great battle of Talikot, in which the proud Ramaraja was slain, his forces utterly routed, and a hundred thousand of them left dead upon the field.

With none to oppose them, the Mahomedan leaders marched upon the splendid city of Vijayanagar. They left it nothing but a waste of ruins, and a waste of ruins it has ever since remained.

Though the power of the kings of Vijayanagar was now a thing of the past, they continued to rule a part of their old domains, and they made a new capital at Chandragiri, about two hundred miles to the south-east.

IN the year 1614 the good and wise Venkata Raya was nearing his end. His queen, Bayama, daughter of Jaga Raya, had, of course, longed for a son, but no son had been granted to her. So she tried to pass off another woman's child as her own, and the king, out of pity for his queen, pretended to be deceived, and allowed the boy to be called 'Chika' (or young) Raya,

and to be brought up in the palace, though he did not otherwise treat him as a son.

And now the old king lay dying. At his right hand waited his nephew and heir, Ranga Raya, whom the king had invested with the ring and insignia of state, commanding the chiefs to show him allegiance and to acknowledge him as heir to the throne. But there was one chief, Jaga Raya, whose heart was angry within him, for he had previously married his niece to the old king's adopted son, and had hoped that the boy would succeed. Two other chiefs also refused to do homage to the chosen heir, seeing advantage to themselves in siding with the powerful Jaga Raya.

The old king died and Ranga Raya ascended the throne. To him came all the chiefs except three, to offer their allegiance. But some of them he dismissed, having found them at fault over certain moneys and property. This angered them and they sought out Jaga Raya, and offered to make common cause with him against the new ruler. Jaga Raya began to hope once more that his nephew might displace Ranga Raya, and plotted with the defaulting chiefs how this might best be accomplished.

Busy with the affairs of state, the new king was unaware of this plot, nor did Jaga Raya proceed openly against him, but sent a messenger to Ranga Raya to say that he and the other unruly chiefs had decided to offer their homage to the throne. Desirous of attaching these powerful nobles to him, Ranga Raya bade them come

before him, and gave orders to his guards that they and their followers should be received within the fortress and treated with honour as vassals of the crown.

And so it came about that Jaga Raya and his accomplices were able to enter the fortress and place their soldiers at every gate before the king's guards realised that treachery was afoot. Too late an effort was made to close the palace gates; Jaga Raya's soldiers cut down the defenders and forced their way into the interior. Then one of the false chiefs said, 'I will deliver the king to you', and he sought out Ranga Raya and said to him, 'You are my prisoner. Go quietly and your life shall be spared. From now onwards you must relinquish the throne and never attempt to regain it.'

Finding himself betrayed, and realising that the palace was in possession of hostile troops, the poor king could do nothing but submit, and, followed by his wife and children, left the palace with mournful face and downcast eyes. Not one hand was lifted to salute him who so lately had been king, not one loyal voice was raised in protest against the traitors.

But there was a chief, Echama Naik by name, whose loyalty to Ranga Raya was unswerving. His camp lay some miles away from the capital, and thus he knew nothing of what was happening or how the king had been betrayed by the treachery of Jaga Raya. When the news came to him, he shut himself up in his fortress and made ready his troops, so that if opportunity offered he

could strike a blow for his beloved master, Ranga Raya.

Having thrust the deposed king into prison with all his family, Jaga Raya lost no time in setting his nephew on the throne of the Rayas, with all the symbols of State, and assuming as his uncle much power and authority in the affairs of the kingdom. Haughtily he bade all the chiefs do homage to the usurper, and they, having much to fear from Jaga Raya, came and offered their allegiance. But one chief did not come, the same Echama Naik whose heart beat loyally for the deposed king. To Jaga Raya's peremptory summons he made a spirited answer. 'Am I the man to do homage to a nameless boy? My master is Ranga Raya; to him alone will I give my allegiance and for him will my sword remain unsheathed!'

Now when Jaga Raya received this independent message from Echama Naik, a chief who could only muster four thousand soldiers in the field, he repeated his summons, adding that if Echama Naik did not come to the palace, he, Jaga Raya, would go forth and destroy him. To this the fearless Echama Naik replied, 'Jaga Raya can come out against me whenever he is ready, and I, Echama Naik, will await him with such men as I have.'

Now at this time Jaga Raya had much difficulty in keeping the other chiefs attached to the cause of the new king, and he thought to himself, 'It would not be wise to offer battle to Echama Naik now. I will write him a letter in fair words,

offering him presents of lands and revenue if he will serve my nephew.'

And this he did, couching his letter in kind and flattering terms, praising Echama Naik's bravery, and offering him a high place in the new king's favour.

But the loyal chief was not to be bribed, and as he read the honied words of the crafty Jaga Raya, he pondered the matter carefully. 'What lands has Jaga Raya to offer me?' he thought. 'What revenues save those that by right belong to my beloved master, Ranga Raya? To him alone shall my allegiance be given.' Inspired by devotion, he made ready for battle, and sent word to Jaga Raya that, as all the chiefs were on the side of the new king, they might come out and do their best to defeat one who would never offer homage to any but the rightful ruler.

To this bold challenge Jaga Raya knew not what to reply, so he busied himself with flattering and honouring the chiefs, hoping that later he might be able with their assistance to crush the independent Echama Naik, whose loyalty to Ranga Raya nothing seemed to be able to shake.

In the meantime Echama Naik was trying to get into communication with the deposed king, who languished in the closest captivity at the pleasure of Jaga Raya. Having failed in several attempts to secure the person of Ranga Raya, Echama Naik conceived the idea of trying to smuggle out of the fortress one of the young princes, hoping that he might be able to set the boy

on the throne of his ancestors. After much thought he hit upon a plan and with much boldness prepared to carry it out. Sending for the dhoby who washed the clothes of the imprisoned king, he said: 'Great will be your reward if you secure for me the person of Ranga Raya's second son.' Echama Naik knew that the eldest was too big to be conveyed out of the fortress secretly, and he was not particular which boy escaped so long as he was a son of the true king.

The dhoby saw an opportunity of gaining much profit, and as he was a poor man with nothing to lose, he agreed to assist in rescuing the young prince from captivity. Then Echama Naik wrote a letter to his beloved master, begging him to deliver his second son to the dhoby, who would take good care that no harm befell the boy. This letter the dhoby concealed underneath the King's clean clothes, and on the pretence of showing him a rent in a garment secretly passed the letter to Ranga Raya. When the king had read the letter, he summoned his second son, and, bidding him a tender farewell, told the dhoby to carry out the orders of Echama Naik.

The dhoby bade the young prince place himself in the big basket in which the dirty clothes were taken to be washed, and over the boy he placed the soiled garments, putting the very dirtiest on the top. In this way he passed the guards without hindrance. Little they knew that the young prince was escaping, nor did their haughty master, Jaga Raya, guess that he had been foiled by Echama Naik.

For three days the dhoby hid the prince, and then, thinking all was safe, sent the boy under cover of darkness to the camp of Echama Naik. Deep was the joy of the faithful chief at the sight of the young prince, who was received with great honour and rejoicing by him and all his soldiery.

When the news of the prince's escape came to the ears of Jaga Raya he was very wroth, and, to avenge the trick that had been played upon him, he doubled the guards over Ranga Raya, and gave orders that the poor prisoner should have his rations cut down to a little coarse rice and a few vegetables.

Now when it became known that Echama Naik had smuggled the young prince out of prison under the very noses of the guard, some of the chiefs began to talk in this wise, 'Echama Naik is a chief of boldness and sagacity. Alone he has rescued the young rana. The time has come for us to throw off the yoke of Jaga Raya and his upstart nephew and place our armies at the service of the real Raya.'

Seeking Echama Naik, they announced their decision, which so heartened the gallant chief that once again he planned to release Ranga Raya, though, by the orders of Jaga Raya, he was trebly guarded.

Selecting a few of his most trusted followers, he instructed them to go to the fortress where the king lay and to seek opportunity of employment there. If they were successful, they were to dig, with secrecy and speed, an

underground passage to the apartment of the captive.

The men did as they were bidden, and so well did they go about their business that they obtained employment at the fortress, and in a very short time had begun to dig the secret passage. Although they could only work at the dead of night and had no light but that of a tiny torch, they laboured so untiringly that in a few days they had dug through to the very room where Ranga Raya was imprisoned. Great was the king's surprise to find his apartment full of soldiers.

At first he thought they were Jaga Raya's men come to inflict some fresh hardship or insult, but instead of this the men prostrated themselves before the astonished king, while their leader drew forth a palm-leaf letter, in which Echama Naik had set forth the means by which his royal master should make good his escape.

When the poor captive read the loyal and loving words of his faithful chief, the tears coursed down his face, and speech deserted him ; then, mastering his emotion, he turned to the leader of the rescue party and said, 'I should indeed be unworthy of your gallant chief's devotion if I hesitated to follow out the plan of escape he has so boldly devised.' Calling his wife and children to him he bade them farewell, and, taking off all his clothes but a loin-cloth, prepared to creep down the secret passage, some of Echama Naik's men leading the way, others following the king. On hands and knees they went, sometimes almost choked by dust and stones that fell from the roof

of the tunnel. Not a word was spoken, not a sound broke the stillness save the laboured breathing of the men. The king could scarcely dare to hope that all would be well, until a glimmer of light showed the end of the tunnel was in sight. His spirits rose and he murmured to himself, 'I am free! I am free!' Almost as he said these words there was a sudden fall of earth and stones, and a heavy body came tumbling almost on the top of him. One of the guards going his rounds of the fortress had stepped on a part where the ground was weakened by the excavation of the tunnel, and had fallen into the passage. There was no room to draw swords, no chance of hurrying the king to safety. The alarm was given and, within a few minutes, Ranga Raya, a pitiable figure, naked save for his loin-cloth, his body covered with dust, his knees scratched and bleeding, was dragged before Jaga Raya who, wild with rage at the attempted rescue, thrust his hated rival into solitary confinement which not even his wife and children were allowed to share.

When Echama Naik heard of the failure of his effort to rescue the king, his heart grew heavy within him, but it was not in his nature to relinquish a great cause, and it seemed to him that even his life would be a small price to pay for the glory of setting a descendant of the great Ramaraja on the throne.

Now there happened to be amongst the chiefs one who, though little more than a youth, was already celebrated for his daring. His followers were but few, some five hundred men, but Echama

Naik had reason to know that neither the chief nor his soldiers had ever drawn back from danger. Calling this young man to him, Echama Naik said: 'I have heard that Jaga Raya has gone forth to meet the chiefs whose homage he has bought with soft words and fine promises.

'It is said that of all his soldiers only a few remain to guard the fortress where Ranga Raya lies captive. Now is the time for one who loves the king to strike a blow for the right, the just cause.

'If I move my troops from my fortress, word will at once be taken to Jaga Raya and he will return with his twenty thousand men and cut us off, but of you he has no suspicion and to you will fall the glory of rescuing your king!'

Fired at these brave words, the young chief swore to take the fortress or die in the attempt.

Rallying his men, he marched on Chandragiri, and attacked the capital with such vigour that the surprised guards fled in front of the invader or fell before the swords of his soldiers, leaving the victorious young chief free to release Ranga Raya.

Sending word of his success to Echama Naik and begging for reinforcements, for he feared the speedy arrival of Jaga Raya and his troops, the rescuer sought the captive king, and bowing low before him offered his homage. Suddenly shouts and the noise of conflict arose without: Jaga Raya had returned, and the brave chief and all his trusty men were slain.

Then Jaga Raya sent for his brother, a cruel and crafty man, whose guilty hand was stained

with the blood of many an innocent person, and said to him, 'This Echama Naik gives me no peace. In vain have I offered him lands and presents of jewels and money. I have gone so far as to promise him the first place amongst the Raya's chiefs if he will but offer allegiance, but no! so long as Ranga Raya lives he will do homage to none other. It were well if Ranga Raya died! I leave the rest to you, my brother.'

So Jaga Raya's brother sought out the poor king where he sat in his gloomy cell, and said to him: 'The time has come when you must die. Choose whether it shall be by your own sword or by the hand of another.'

Then Ranga Raya asked but one boon, 'Let me bid farewell to my wife and children before I close my eyes in death!'

When his faithful wife and their children came into his presence he told them gently that he must die, but that one who had always done his best and taken nothing that was not his own had naught to fear. Then, drawing his sword he plunged it into the breast of his wife, and in the same way ended the life of his two sons and one daughter. There remained but one child, a girl whom the king dearly loved. As she stood awaiting her doom, making no cry but looking at her father with mournful eyes, he turned away. Even to save his honour, the honour of his house, he could not strike his little child to the ground.

With a groan he turned away and buried his sword in his own breaking heart. But that no child of the dead Raya should live, the brother of

Jaga Raya himself slew the little girl. So perished Ranga Raya and his family, all save the prince whom the loyal Echama Naik had previously rescued.

When Jaga Raya heard that Ranga Raya was dead, he felt that he might now enjoy some peace from the schemes of Echama Naik, but the loyal chief was so infuriated when he heard of the manner in which Ranga Raya had met his death that he forthwith sent a message to Jaga Raya saying, 'Now that you have murdered your king and his children and there remains only one boy in my safe keeping, come out, O Jaga Raya, with your troops, and if you can kill both him and me, then, and only then, shall your nephew be safe on the throne.'

Hearing of this fearless challenge, several of the chiefs rallied to the cause of Ranga Raya's son, and massing their troops they took the field with Echama Naik against Jaga Raya.

But the latter had sixty thousand men, and his enemies between them could only muster twenty thousand; thus Jaga Raya was confident of success, and boasted that once the battle was decided in his favour he would make short work of Echama Naik and the prince he protected.

When these bold threats came to the ear of Echama Naik he spoke no word, for he knew that Jaga Raya's forces far outnumbered those of himself and his allies. Still, confident in the righteousness of his cause, he hoped for victory and encouraged the soldiers with brave words and good counsel.

Placing the young prince in the middle of ten thousand men, he led the other ten thousand against Jaga Raya, and fell upon the enemy with such violence that the soldiers of Jaga Raya fled in disorder, pursued to the very portals of their chief's tent by the valiant Echama Naik and his victorious troops. In triumph Echama Naik entered the tent of Jaga Raya, in triumph he demanded the royal insignia that had once belonged to Venkata Raya. Beaten and humiliated as he was, Jaga Raya had no choice but to yield them to his conqueror.

Then, the wish of his heart accomplished, Echama Naik saw the son of Ranga Raya acclaimed by all the chiefs as their ruler, while the haughty Jaga Raya was forced to fly with the remnants of his broken army to the jungles, with no hope whatever of regaining the throne for his nephew.

Thus ends the story of the noble chief who, in face of all dangers and difficulties, wrested the throne from the usurper and set up the rightful heir as king. Surely by virtue of his courage and devotion he has carved for himself a place in the annals of India's Golden Deeds.

VI

THE HEROIC QUEEN

Chand Bibi, daughter of the Sultan of Ahmednagar, married Ali Adil Shah, Sultan of Bijapur, who, to bind more closely the alliance between the two kingdoms, gave his sister as bride to the Crown Prince of Ahmednagar.

When the battle of Talikot, fought in 1565, went against the Hindu force, the victory was mainly accomplished by the co-operation of the Bijapur cavalry and the Ahmednagar artillery.

In Chand Bibi, Ali Adil Shah possessed an intelligent and helpful consort, and on his death it was found that he had appointed her as Queen Regent during the minority of his nephew, Ibrahim Adil Shah, the heir to the throne, then only a little boy.

Chand Bibi discharged her duties as Regent with wisdom and courage; she was popular with the army, and was loved by the people of Bijapur as much for her qualities of heart as she was admired for her able administration of the State.

She was, however, handicapped by a succession of clever but unscrupulous ministers, one of whom, at one time, actually secured her banishment to Satara. Directly the young King obtained authority, he recalled Chand Bibi to Bijapur, where she lived for some time in seclusion, taking no part in the government of the State.

This peace did not last long. She was embroiled in the troubles that beset the State of Ahmednagar. The Nizam Shah, her brother, was dead, and fast and furious raged the quarrels over the succession.

The Deccani faction, unwilling to place the son of the deceased Nizam on the throne, hastily crowned a child of unknown birth for whom they claimed succession, and to strengthen their position they besought the aid of Prince Murad, the son of the Emperor Shah Jahan, who, already

having designs of conquering the Deccan, only wanted a good excuse to invade it.

The adherents of the direct heir came to Chand Bibi, begging her to lend her assistance in establishing her brother's son on the throne.

The gallant lady undertook the defence of Ahmednagar against the Mogul forces with such bravery and military skill that Prince Murad was obliged to raise the siege and withdraw his forces. The siege of Ahmednagar took place in 1595.

CHAND BIBI, dowager queen of Bijapur, sat in the royal palace surrounded by her maidens. As they busily plied their needles, threaded with gold or silver, on long strips of bright embroidery, she read aloud to them, in a rich clear voice, stories of chivalry and romance.

At her feet nestled Zora, the girl wife of Chand Bibi's adopted son, Abbas Khan.

All was happiness and peace, and as the queen paused for a moment in her reading, and let her eyes travel from the dainty forms of the girls to the rich furnishings of the spacious room, and thence to the open window, through which could be seen the gilded minarets of the mosques, she drew a sigh of pleasure, for hers had hitherto been a hard and exacting life, and it was sweet to rest.

'Why do you sigh, dearest lady?' enquired Zora, looking up into Chand Bibi's beautiful face a little anxiously, and all the maidens glanced at their royal mistress, their bright eyes searching for the reason of her pensiveness.

'Did I sigh?' replied the queen, smiling gaily. 'If I did, it was not a sign of sadness,

dear child. Indeed, I was thinking how pleasantly my days are passed in congenial work and recreation. It was not always thus with me'—and she raised her delicate hand; she looked at it as she added, 'This hand has wielded a sword such as only a strong man might lift, but it would rather ply a needle.'

All the girls listened eagerly to Chand Bibi's words, for they knew she was as skilled in the arts of war, as she was versed in those of peace. It was common knowledge that no daring cavalry leader could rival her in horsemanship, no minstrel play or sing more sweetly, no wily minister outwit her in diplomacy, no *maulvi* expound the learned books more clearly, and yet there she sat, a woman of delicate build, whose soft beauty was not marred by one stern or wilful line.

The queen resumed her reading and the girls bent over their work once more. There was nothing in the scene to cause anyone to think that this peaceful hour would end differently from many another of its kind.

Suddenly there arose in the courtyard below a sound of bustle and movement, and voices were raised in haughty dispute. Above the clamour the words could be heard, 'To the queen! This business permits of no delay'; then more words and the tramping of many feet mingled with the rattling of horses' bits. In a moment Zora was on her feet, and running to the window peeped between the curtains. 'There are a hundred or more horsemen below' she said; 'what brings them here?'

Drawing her light veil about her face, the queen laid aside her book, and, looking meaningly at Zora, said quietly, 'It would seem that our pleasant reading is over for the time. Ladies, you may withdraw until I require your presence!'

The maidens rose at once, and with graceful obeisances withdrew to an inner chamber. Zora alone lingered, saying fearfully, 'Let me remain with you, dear mother. No idle curiosity prompts this request, but fear for your safety possesses my heart.'

'Nay, Zora, my pretty one, do not tremble so,' replied Chand Bibi tenderly. 'Are there not a hundred loyal hearts beating for me in the palace. Come, follow your companions, and remember that you are a soldier's wife!'

Thus gently rebuked, Zora raised her head and, looking at the queen bravely and lovingly, withdrew.

Scarcely had her bright draperies disappeared through the door when a servant stood before Chand Bibi and, salaaming deeply, informed her that an envoy from Ahmednagar, accompanied by a mounted escort, had arrived, and that the envoy craved immediate audience of the queen dowager.

No shadow of concern passed over the calm face of Chand Bibi.

'See to it that every hospitable attention is shown towards our guest,' she commanded, 'and inform the Prince Abbas Khan that I desire his presence immediately.'

The servant withdrew, and almost at once returned, followed closely by Abbas Khan, whose handsome countenance showed traces of deep excitement and some concern. These signs were not lost upon the queen.

'Have you come to tell me that my armour is growing rusty for lack of use?' she asked lightly.

'Ah, jest not, dear mother', replied Abbas Khan with emotion. 'There is bitter strife in Ahmednagar; each party wishes to place its own candidate on the vacant throne. Fast and furious rage the quarrels between the different factions, and, to complicate matters, Prince Murad awaits his chance to pounce upon the hapless fort like some bird of prey. Divided in her midst, how can Ahmednagar defend herself against the Mogul armies?'

'And so they come to me,' said the queen slowly; 'ah, my poor country!' and, to hide the sorrow of her thoughts, she walked towards the window and gazed across towards the distant hills, as if she were trying to see beyond them to her native place. When she turned, her look had regained its usual bright firmness, and she continued, 'If Ahmednagar has need of me, to Ahmednagar I will go; nay, dissuade me not, Abbas Khan; you know my temper well enough to know that danger means nothing to one so used to it; but tell me, you who are dear to me as a dearly loved son, if I go forth to champion the cause of right, will you accompany me?'

Then Abbas Khan drew his noble form to its full height, and, placing his hand on the hilt of

his sword, he said, 'I swear by all that I hold most sacred and on the blade of my sword to follow you to death or victory, noble queen.'

'No lady ever had truer knight, no mother dearer son' answered Chand Bibi, deeply moved. 'And now' she continued in a firm and purposeful voice 'let us have speech with the envoy and learn this urgent business on which he has travelled.'

When the envoy from Ahmednagar was ushered into the presence of Chand Bibi he learnt nothing from her calm and dignified demeanour. Graciously she bade him state his errand, listening with keen attention to every detail of his description of the desperate plight in which the unfortunate State stood. From time to time she plied him with brief questions relating to the number of loyal troops available in the fort, the condition of the defences, and the actual position of Prince Murad's troops. Not one point escaped her, and when she was satisfied that she understood the position, she said very quietly, 'I would have you understand, good sir, that, dear as the independence of Ahmednagar is to me, I am only a woman with a woman's limited strength. Are you and the other captains prepared to accept me as your leader and to follow my veil as if it were your standard?'

Then the envoy bowed low before Chand Bibi and replied, 'Great and noble queen, your name alone will strengthen the arm of every man to fight for the right cause. So great is the fame of your wisdom, so powerful the influence you wield over the soldiers, that should you but come to

Ahmednagar every blade would flash out to defend the rights of your brother's son!'

The queen thought for a moment, and then made answer, 'Once I came to Ahmednagar to redeem her from bloodshed, but I accomplished nothing. My heart sickened, and I returned to Bijapur weary of warfare, vowing that I would spend my remaining days in piety and peace. Think you that I should succeed now where I failed then?'

'You will not fail, brave queen,' said the envoy stoutly. 'Only let me return and tell my party the good tidings that you will defend the fort. A thousand swords will leap out, a thousand voices shout in triumph.'

The queen's eyes flashed through her veil, and involuntarily her hand sought for her sword hilt. 'My fighting blood rises to your brave words,' she said. 'Enough! I will come to Ahmednagar, and let Prince Murad look to his laurels.'

Overjoyed at the success of his mission, the envoy rendered his faithful homage to Chand Bibi and took a respectful farewell.

The news of the queen's decision spread quickly through the palace. No more were the days devoted to peaceful arts. The queen was busy in councils of war, and before many days were past she rode out from Bijapur at the head of a picked party of horsemen, accompanied by Abbas Khan and his dainty bride, who refused to be left behind in the safety of Bijapur, preferring to share the risks of the campaign with the two beings she loved most in the whole world.

When Chand Bibi rode into Ahmednagar she was received with every sign of joy and relief, and at once took command of the situation.

Her first decisive action was to solicit the aid of the neighbouring sultanates, Bijapur and Golconda. Of the first she was assured, for her nephew Ibrahim ruled as sultan, and she was as dear to him as if she were his mother.

But alas! there was a traitor in the very heart of the Ahmednagar camp. The governor of the fort, hoping to gain favour with the enemy, sent word to Prince Murad, bidding him hasten, as only a woman held the kingdom of Ahmednagar. His treachery was quickly discovered, and he suffered immediate death. Then the dauntless Chand Bibi herself sent a letter to the Mogul Prince, saying that if he came as a friend they would welcome him and do him honour, but if as a foe, she and all her army would resist him until the last shot had been fired and the last drop of fighting blood shed. But Prince Murad had set his heart on capturing Ahmednagar. Was the envoy of the mighty Akbar to be dictated to by a woman and made to accept the terms she laid down? His answer was to hurry on the attack, and Queen Chand prepared herself to resist it.

Then the malcontents of Ahmednagar, the very same who had fought and disputed with each other over the succession, rallied round the splendid woman who led them.

With no sign of fear or haste she prepared for the attack, seeing that there was no scarcity of

food, inspecting the defences, talking to the men who were soon to be defenders of the city against the greatest power in India.

Urgently she besought that troops might be hurried up from her allies, and her urgency was not misplaced, for a troop of cavalry, owing to its delay in starting from Bijapur, was intercepted and cut up by the Mogul forces, who thereafter had a straight and clear road to Ahmednagar.

Then the queen resigned herself to the inevitable. No aid from outside could possibly reach her, as the roads to the fort were thick with enemy troops. She resolved to put up a staunch defence, and here her early training in the art of war helped her. Her marksmen, mostly Arabs, were deadly shots, and they harassed the investing Moguls most cruelly. The queen, no amateur in the science of defence, met every device of the attacking force with the skill of a practised commander. As fast as they mined the approaches she countermined. If they made a breach by the aid of their batteries, it was immediately repaired by the defenders.

Prince Murad began to change his opinion about Chand Bibi, and to realise that in her he had met more than a match. His troops were suffering from famine, and the fort seemed no nearer falling than on the first day of the siege.

Inside the beleaguered fort Chand Bibi was everywhere, encouraging and cheering on the defenders. No post was too dangerous for her, and her veil fluttered from the most exposed ramparts. She was absolutely fearless.

Then once more the queen wrote to Bijapur, begging them to send troops to her aid and that of the brave garrison, but no answer came and she began to fear that for some reason her nephew had failed her. But the truth was that her letters were intercepted by the Mogul commanders who, submitting them to Prince Murad, received them back from him with many jibes of his own added. Then they were sent on to Bijapur. Thus it was that no aid came from the quarter whence it might have been confidently expected, for the Bijapur forces had no wish to be cut to pieces by the Moguls long before they got to the fort of Ahmednagar.

And so the siege dragged on, until besiegers and besieged were alike weary. One night, when the queen was making her usual round of the walls, she heard a loud voice from the enemy lines call out, 'O brave friends and brothers in the faith, well have you fought for the honour of your cause. Yield now, that more bloodshed may be averted. Under the very bastions where you now stand are mines loaded and ready, and they will be fired to admit the army of the king of kings. Beware! I have warned you. Only complete surrender will avail to save you all from instant death.'

Then the voice ceased and all was still, and many of those who had heard the warning words were afraid and besought the queen to surrender. But Chand Bibi stood firm and, raising her voice, called out clearly so that every word might be heard by the invaders, 'We will not yield now that victory is in our grasp. Are we frightened

women to beg our lives from our enemies? O! my sons, will you sacrifice your loved ones to the violence of the Mogul soldiers? I am only a weak woman, but I will defend this spot with my life. The Lord will deliver us from the tyrants. Away, bring up the miners. Set to work. I would rather tear up the ground with my fingers than suffer this danger to exist when there is still time to avert it!'

The queen's brave words put a very different spirit into the garrison, and with a loud cry of defiance to the enemy they called out as one man, 'O Mother, we will die but we will not desert you. We will never yield.'

Then, led by the dauntless queen, they set to work, axes in hand, and descending the shafts laid bare the mines. They then extracted the gunpowder and rendered them useless. When the first mine was destroyed and its defenders driven out, the alarm was given in the camp of the Moguls.

Hurriedly Prince Murad ran to the spot, only to find that the mines on which he had counted most surely to blow up the fort, and which had occupied his sappers a month to lay, had been totally destroyed. There was only one small mine left that had escaped the defenders.

Immediate orders were given to fire this remaining mine before Chand Bibi's miners could remove it, and a party was warned to attack the fort immediately a breach was caused by the explosion.

Anxiously the attacking commanders watched the thin wisp of smoke that issued from the fort

wall. Then there was a dull explosion, and a heap of earth and stones was hurled into the air. The little mine had done its work, and a breach had been made in the rampart of the fort.

In the Mogul camp there was great rejoicing and the stormers made for the breach. Within the fort Queen Chand, as she saw the smoke and dust clear away, realised the calamity that had occurred.

For a moment it seemed as if she must lose the day: some of the garrison were already preparing for flight.

Desperately she rallied them, with words commanding and impassioned. 'Remember your oath,' she cried. 'Where will you fly but into the midst of the enemy? Your honour is at stake, and should you fail me now, who will sing your bravery? See, we women do not blench.' At this moment the devoted Zora arrived on the battlements bearing the light armour and sword belonging to Queen Chand. Donning these, the intrepid woman sprang forward, waving her naked sword above her head and crying in a loud firm voice, 'To the breach, my people. Who will follow my veil? Better death than infamy! Even if we die, we may meet ere night in the paradise of the brave.'

Again the personal valour of their queen and her appeal to their honour put heart into the garrison, and they rallied round her to such good effect that the attacking force was completely nonplussed by the resource and resistance of the defenders.

Abbas Khan, the adopted son of the queen, let himself down into the breach by means of gabions (rough baskets filled with earth), and in this way, assisted by some of his finest marksmen, he made of the breach a fine point of vantage from which to harass the attackers.

Feeling that immediate danger was forestalled, the queen ordered that a feast should be made for the bold defenders, and here her forethought was well rewarded, for there was ample food of all kinds inside the fort.

But while the soldiers had of the best, the queen herself took nothing but a little rice, never leaving her place near the breach.

With her remained the faithful Zora, and below, keeping the breach, were Abbas Khan and his handful of Arab marksmen.

For some time the Moguls had ceased to attack, but the queen knew that sooner or later the assault would begin, and that an effort would be made to rush the breach. Every gun in the fort was turned on this spot; it would not be easy to storm Ahmednagar.

All was very still, the sun beat down unmercifully, and not a leaf stirred. At noon the voice of the muezzin called forth the hour of prayer in each camp, and the Moslems silently spread their scarves where they sat.

Suddenly from the enemy lines sprang a tall figure dressed in shining armour and wearing a plumed hat. Pointing to the breach, he dashed forward, motioning to those in the trenches to follow him. Inspired by his gallant lead, Arabs,

Afghans, Rajputs from the Mogul forces followed him, and swarmed towards the breach, shouting their war cries, singing their war songs. Armed with swords, shields, matchlocks, and spears, they made an imposing sight.

The defenders, however, fortified as they were by the matchless example of their queen and leader, were ready for the assault. As the Portuguese leader dashed down the rough path which led to the foot of the breach, followed by his motley soldiery, a perfect storm of gunshot devastated them. From every bastion of the fort the guns thundered out their volley of death. Retreat was impossible, for as the foremost turned to fly they came into contact with those behind, who, sweeping over them, trampled them underfoot. Again and again did the leader attempt to storm the breach, but he could gain no footing on the crumbling earth and fell, hit by an arrow from the bow of some unerring Arab marksman.

Through the tumult of guns, and the shrieks and groans of the dying and wounded, Queen Chand moved calmly, ministering to the fallen, encouraging the defenders, standing at the very mouth of the breach, her delicate veil floating behind her, every word of brave counsel audible to the soldiers.

From afar, Prince Murad saw that gallant figure, and in his grim heart, sullen with resentment at the failure of the attack, rose a feeling of true admiration for the heroic woman.

Night drew near and, utterly repulsed, the Moguls fell back. Their losses, amounted to

CHAND BIBI SPRANG FORWARD, WAVING HER NAKED SWORD ABOVE HER HEAD

thousands. The attack had completely failed, and all they could do was to retire, followed by the merciless fire from the walls of the fort, leaving their dead, their arms, and their standards where they had fallen.

Great was the humiliation in the Mogul camp that night, heavy the mood of the prince who had urged his faithful troops to destruction. He had been beaten by a woman, but surely such a one as had never donned armour before.

As the totally defeated enemy dragged its poor remnants back to the camp, the queen gave orders for the repair of the breach, and when morning came the walls of the fort were intact.

Then, as the day broke, across the space that lay between the fort and the Mogul camp came a messenger bearing a flag of truce. Prince Murad, realising the utter hopelessness of a further attack on Ahmednagar, sent to its gallant commander his expression of admiration, and requested her permission to remove the dead.

The queen at once granted this request, and by nightfall the grisly signs of battle had been cleared away.

All was peace, and now the brave woman might rest and take off her armour. She had saved the fort, but her only feeling was one of deep thankfulness and gratitude to its defenders. No sign of personal gratification appeared in her manner.

To those who crowded round her, praising her, extolling her courage, giving to her all the honours of conquest, she said very gently, 'I thank

the Lord, on whom I depended and who gave strength to your arms to gain the victory.'

And those who read the story of Queen Chand will see that not by mere pride of place did she gain for herself an undying name in the story of India, but by her qualities of courage, truth, and honour she achieved one of its most Golden Deeds.

VII

DESHPANDE THE DAUNTLESS

The character and the achievements of Shivaji are familiar to all Indians, but, outside Maharashtra, the gallant end of Baji Prabhu, Deshpande of Hardis Mawal, is not as widely known as it deserves to be. The dogged rearguard action which he fought and in which he gave his life to allow his beloved commander to reach the safety of a fort, has been compared, not unreasonably, with the famous fight of the Spartans at Thermopylae, in which the whole contingent knew that they were doomed and preferred to die rather than retreat. It is true that Baji Deshpande's men—or what was left of them—were able to retreat after the action, but they never gave an inch until they knew that Shivaji had reached his goal, and then they retired in good order. They had done their work and done it gallantly, and to continue the engagement would have been bad tactics, and would have involved further and unnecessary loss.

All, or nearly all, great commanders, such as Alexander, Cæsar, Nelson, and Napoleon, have possessed that quality which we call personal magnetism, and which attracts to them the unquestioning devotion of those under their command. Shivaji was no exception, as the story of Baji Deshpande will show.

The mere fact that Shivaji could entrust such a task to this man, and rely upon his absolute devotion, is a tribute to the power he possessed of attaching to himself the single-hearted loyalty of those who came under his influence. In past days Baji Deshpande had been a faithful adherent of Chandra Rao More, and the Mores had been ruthlessly crushed by Shivaji in 1655. Some time after the death of Chandra Rao More, Deshpande had entered Shivaji's service. His staunchness was eventually to be put to a very severe test.

In 1659 had taken place the famous interview between Shivaji and Afzal Khan, which had ended in the death of Afzal and the defeat of his army. For a time Shivaji had matters his own way, defeating the Mahomedans again, and capturing, among other places, the important hill-fort of Panhala, which is about twelve miles N.-W. of Kolhapur.

Panhala, like most of the Maratha forts, stands out prominently, at a height of about three thousand feet. The Shivaji tower, a two-storied building looking down on to a rocky precipice, at once catches the eye. Not far off are the large stone granaries, in which Shivaji stored the supplies which enabled him to withstand the long siege.

BY one of his bold and sudden attacks Shivaji had captured the mountain fortress of Panhala. About this time Siddi Jauhar, an Abyssinian who had revolted and usurped some local power, came to terms with the ruler of Bijapur. The sultan, Ali Adil Shahji, decided that he was the man to crush Shivaji. An army of about twenty-five thousand men, with considerable artillery, was collected and put into the field against the bold Maratha. Shivaji had to retire to Panhala, and the siege commenced. It was a month or so before the monsoon, and Shivaji probably expected that with the break of the rains, which are heavy on the Western Ghats and would make life for an investing force very hard, the siege would soon be raised. Meantime small bodies of picked men sallied forth at night, crept down the cliffs, and raided the besiegers' lines.

In these dangerous adventures Baji Deshpande played his part. But Siddi Jauhar was not lightly to be driven off. The Maratha forces from outside, which attempted to create diversions,

were either defeated or held in check. Shivaji's outposts were driven into the fort, and the ring of steel was closely drawn around Panhala.

So the siege dragged on through the monsoon, and Shivaji began to find himself in a very tight corner. Supplies would not last indefinitely, and if Panhala were captured, and he himself with it, all his work so far would have been in vain. To venture out with all his men and give battle to Siddi Jauhar would have been to court disaster, for the odds against the garrison were too heavy.

But Shivaji knew that Siddi Jauhar was ambitious; the bait of power, he thought, might tempt him. So the prospect of a kingdom, which, with Shivaji's help, he could carve out for himself, was secretly and subtly suggested. These hopes were too tempting to be resisted. Shivaji was granted a safe-conduct, was received in audience, and returned to the fort as the supposed secret ally of the Abyssinian. For the present the siege was to be nominally continued.

Such dealings are not easily kept a complete secret, and at least an inkling of what was going on reached the ears of the Sultan of Bijapur, who was naturally extremely angry. He resolved to take the field himself, and was soon on the march for Panhala.

Shivaji, of course, had news of the sultan's approach, and decided that it was time to make a move. Whether by the connivance of Siddi Jauhar, or whether through the sentries sleeping at their posts, in the belief that the surrender of the fort had been fixed for next day, Shivaji and

some five thousand men made their way down from the fort and through the besiegers' lines undetected, or at least unopposed, and were soon marching as fast as they could for Vishalgad.

Siddi Jauhar's second in command was young Fazl Mahomed (Fazl Khan), the son of Afzal Khan. He was one of those who had survived the disaster at Pratapgad, and the idea that Shivaji should escape without a blow was more than he could stand. As soon as he learned that the Maratha had given them the slip, he prevailed upon Siddi Jauhar to allow him and Jauhar's son, Siddi Aziz, to start in pursuit with a strong force of cavalry. Siddi Jauhar himself promised to follow with the infantry.

From Panhala to Vishalgad, as the crow flies, is twenty-five miles, but *via* Malkapur (the route which Shivaji probably followed) it is somewhat further.

We do not know the exact time when Shivaji got away, but he must have had some hours' start, and in the difficult country between Panhala and Vishalgad cavalry cannot move very much quicker than infantry who are making a forced march.

So it was not till midday, when Shivaji was still about six miles from Vishalgad, that he caught sight of the pursuing force.

For the sake of his cause it was essential that Shivaji should reach the comparative safety of Vishalgad, a fortress which it is difficult to invest from the Konkan or western side, and where he would not be in serious danger of being starved

out. So he at once divided his troops, and placed one half of them as a rearguard under the command of Baji Deshpande, with orders to hold a certain narrow pass at all costs, till he himself with the rest of his men had reached Vishalgad. The signal of Shivaji's arrival was to be the firing of five guns, upon which Baji Deshpande was to break off the fight and retire on Vishalgad. It was a difficult as well as a dangerous task. Whatever the strength of the Musulman cavalry, they were sure to be reinforced before long; the Maratha rearguard would then be heavily outnumbered, and to break off a rearguard action in the face of a superior enemy is one of the most difficult operations of war.

The rearguard took up its position at the top of a steep ravine. The exact locality cannot be identified, but it is probably in the neighbourhood of Pandhar Pani, between Malkapur and Vishalgad.

Those who know the Deccan may easily picture the scene. Between masses of uneven rock on either side runs a defile, less than a quarter of a mile broad. The defile itself is rough enough, but up its slope runs a rude path and it is quite passable by cavalry. But the rocks flanking the defile on each side would effectually prevent any mounted men from encircling a small body of defenders who might try to bar their way. On such rocks only hillmen like Shivaji's Mawalis could operate at all.

Deshpande had drawn his men up in close order to receive the expected cavalry attack. In

a few inspiring words he pointed out to them that the safety of their great commander and all the hope of the Maratha State depended upon their standing firm till Shivaji had reached Vishalgad. 'You have your spears and swords,' he said; 'stand shoulder to shoulder and use them well, and no horsemen can break your ranks.'

The cavalry of the enemy were soon upon them. Up the slope they rode and charged the Maratha line. There was a crash, and for a few moments horses and men were intermingled. But Deshpande's men never wavered; here and there a man fell, but the rest used their spears and swords with deadly effect, and the Musulman wave surged back with many an empty saddle, leaving in front of the Maratha line horses and riders who would never rise again.

Fazl Mahomed prudently decided to await the arrival of the infantry, while Deshpande went round his ranks, praised them for their steadiness, and exhorted them to stand no less firmly in the hand-to-hand fight with the Musulman infantry which was soon to come. And it was not long before the infantry marched steadily up the hill and then charged the Maratha line. For a while the struggle was fierce; spear and sword crashed on shield or were driven home amidst the shouts and groans of both sides, but before long the attackers began to waver, and a minute or two later they were pouring back down the slope, leaving behind them many of their number dead and wounded.

Fazl Mahomed's mortification was extreme. He waited, however, for fresh reinforcements, and in person led the last and the heaviest assault on the position.

The brave Deshpande had reorganised his sorely stricken force as best he could. The next attack would, he knew, be still more severe than the first two, but he heartened his men with the thought that it would also be the last assault, and that if they could but repulse this too, the day was won and Shivaji would be safe. 'Soon' said he 'you will hear the welcome boom of the signal gun.' On came the Musulmans in close order and in deep formation. Under the sheer weight of numbers the Marathas were forced back, but Deshpande called on them for a supreme effort and the Bijapuris could not gain another foot of ground. It was like the last stand of the Scots at Flodden:

> The stubborn spearmen still made good
> Their dark impenetrable wood,
> Each stepping where his comrade stood
> The instant that he fell.
> No thought was there of dastard flight;
> Linked in the serried phalanx tight,
> Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
> As fearlessly and well.

The gallant commander himself had been wounded more than once, and at last he fell, faint and dying from loss of blood. Almost at that moment there was heard the distant boom of guns. Shivaji had reached Vishalgad, and Deshpande, before he passed away, knew that he had not fought in vain. Around him lay seven hundred

of his men, dead or dying. But the Bijapuris too had heard the guns, and guessed that Shivaji was beyond their reach: they had no longer any heart for the attack.

Sadly and proudly the remnant of the Marathas lifted the body of their gallant commander, and, bearing it with them, marched steadily for Vishalgad.

VIII

THE DEVOTED SIKH

In Lord Roberts' Forty-One Years in India *there is a passage in his account of his Afghan campaign of 1878, which describes the devotion and courage of his two Sikh orderlies. 'On this as on many other occasions' he writes 'they kept close round me, determined that no shot should reach me if they could prevent it; and on my being hit in the hand by a spent bullet, and turning to look round in the direction it came from, I beheld one of the Sikhs standing with his arms stretched out trying to screen me from the enemy.'*

Such self-sacrificing devotion to a beloved leader has always been an element in Sikh history; two hundred years before the Afghan war the story of the humble carter who gave his life to secure the body of his guru presents the same picture of the traditional Sikh virtue.

To understand how the united forces of religion and of war produced this remarkable people and how the old carter comes into history, let us take a brief glimpse at the story of the Sikhs.

Nanak Shah, the teacher who planted the seed that was to grow into the Sikh nation, was born of sturdy Jat stock in a village near Lahore in 1469. After travelling as a fakir in search of truth all over India and even to Persia and Mecca, he returned about 1500 to his Jat fellow peasants, to whom he preached his reformed religion. The unity of God, the uselessness of caste, the folly of idolatry, the vanity of professional asceticism, and the necessity of making religion a part of one's daily life—these were the main elements in his teaching. His followers, mostly Jat peasantry, called themselves Sikhs or disciples of their guru.

The movement at first was purely religious, but it was inevitable that in the India of those days a religious sect,

when it attained prominence, would have to defend itself by the sword if it was to hold together and survive.

Babar was just establishing the Mogul power in the Panjab and he had Nanak imprisoned for some months. We have an interesting account of an interview between the reformer and the emperor, in which Nanak stoutly defended his teaching. The emperor seems to have been so impressed that he released Nanak and permitted him to continue his preaching.

The fifth guru, Arjun, compiled the Granth, or Holy Book of the Sikhs, in which were incorporated the teachings and the hymns of Nanak. The head of the Sikhs was now a man of some eminence and the Mogul Governor of Lahore had Arjun arrested and thrown into prison. His death there—which the Sikhs believed was due to torture—aroused the anger of his followers. From that day they ceased to be merely a body of peaceful religious men: they began to defend themselves against persecution and entered upon those struggles with Mogul and Afghan in which only their devotion to their cause and to their leaders enabled them to survive.

Under Arjun's son, Har Govind, who succeeded his father in 1606, a military organisation was developed and the guru himself won fame as a commander in the field.

THERE was now almost comtinuous fighting between the Mahomedans and the Sikhs. The rule of the next two gurus who succeeded the warlike Har Govind was short, and his younger son, Teg Bahadur, was selected as ninth guru in 1664, to continue the struggle against the Mogul oppression. Ten years later he was captured. Before he was taken to Delhi, where a fate that he knew only too well awaited him, he was allowed to send for his young son Govind to say farewell. When the boy came, Teg Bahadur girded on him the famous sword of Har Govind,

saying, 'With this sword did your mighty grandfather defend the faith of the Sikhs; wield it unceasingly in the same good cause. My day is done. I have no fear, for I have faithfully served my God and fought only for what is right in his eyes. Hail to you, future guru of the Sikhs! Watch over your people as I have done.' The boy, too moved to reply, grasped the hilt of his grandfather's sword and bowed his head in mute obedience to his father's commands.

Then Teg Bahadur continued, in a firm and solemn voice, 'I go to meet my fate at the hands of the Mogul King of Delhi. To a brave man death has no terrors, but for the honour of our race I would wish that my body should receive decent burial. It may be that Aurangzeb will seek revenge even after death, and dishonour my corpse by exposing it to the gaze of the curious. It is not seemly that this should happen. My son, if this should be, avenge the insult to your father, and secure me a last resting-place and those holy rites due to one of our caste and creed.'

With this injunction, the father took leave of his son and was removed to Delhi. There he was told that his life would be spared if he would abjure his religion. He rejected the offer with scorn, and was beheaded by the order of Aurangzeb. The emperor carried away by zeal for his religion and by his hatred of all who differed from it ordered that the body should be exposed, and that no relative or follower of the guru should be allowed to remove it for burial.

When the news of the insult to his father's

corpse was brought to the young guru, he at once resolved to fulfil his father's last request. He determined to go to Delhi to recover the body and bring it back to Amritsar for the last rites and decent interment.

Knowing that the enterprise was highly dangerous, and being anxious not to inculpate any of his followers, the brave boy set out quite alone on his mournful task.

The night was dark and not a soul was abroad when he struck the road for Delhi, and he had no idea how he was going to rescue his father's body from under the very eyes of Aurangzeb's guards.

All he knew was that he was going to make the attempt, even at the cost of his own life, and, animated by the memory of his father's last words and the sanctity of his mission, he pushed on unafraid.

When he had gone some miles he heard the sound of an approaching cart, and voices speaking in a muffled way. Not knowing whether the cart might contain friends or foes, Govind stepped off the road into the shadow of a tree and waited. The cart came nearer, and as it passed by where he was concealed, Govind could hear that the occupants were Sikhs and that they were discussing with great indignation the murder and shameful treatment of their revered guru, Teg Bahadur.

Then Govind stepped out boldly and, stopping the cart, made himself known to the carter and his son, who, deeply amazed at meeting the young guru alone and so far from Amritsar, at

once dismounted and made loyal obeisance to their chief. Being assured of their faithfulness, Govind made known to them his dangerous errand, begging them not to disclose to anyone whither he had gone.

Then the old Sikh carter placed himself in front of Govind and said earnestly, 'Go not to Delhi, most holy one, for the place is a death-trap for you. Return, I beg of you, to the fort, and await the time when you may enter the capital of the Mogul tyrant at the head of your valiant troops. Thus shall you avenge the death of your father.' Then Govind drew himself up proudly and said, 'Before he left me to meet his cruel death, my father laid his commands upon me to recover his body and to accord it those last sacred rites due to one of his faith. Can I return to safety and leave his holy corpse exposed to be the mock of every passer-by? Shall this be the way I fulfil my duty to him who was the hope of our people and whose life was forfeit to our faith?'

Then the old Sikh replied, 'All is most true and right that you say, O holy one, but remember that you are now the only hope of our race. If you fall a victim to the hate of the Mogul, who will lead us against the enemy? Turn back, O Guru, turn back, and let your servant have the honour of recovering the body of the beloved Teg Bahadur.'

Deeply moved by evidence of such unselfish devotion, Govind thanked the old man for his loyal offer, but announced his intention of going

himself to Delhi rather than allowing even the humblest of his people to risk their lives. The old Sikh seemed deeply disappointed at the young guru's decision, and said, 'I am too old to fight, and yet I may not be allowed to show my love for my guru when a way lies open to me. I beg of you to let me go back to Delhi. It may be that I can accomplish in safety what you could not accomplish by the loss of your life. For you there would be no escape once you were detected; you would be captured before you could carry out your noble purpose!'

Thus the old Sikh reasoned, and Govind was bound to admit the sense of his words. At last he consented to turn back and let the brave carter and his son go to Delhi in his stead, to try and secure the body of Teg Bahadur from where it lay at the cross-roads at which the execution had taken place.

Overjoyed at the success of his arguments, the old Sikh turned his bullocks' heads and took his way towards the Mogul capital, while the young guru, very sad at heart, but feeling that perhaps he had a duty to perform in living for his people, returned to the fort.

Now, as it was almost certain death for a Sikh to be seen in Delhi, the old carter and his son obtained and dressed themselves in Mahomedan clothing and, thus disguised, entered the city without attracting any notice. For some hours they hid themselves in the less frequented parts of the bazaar, but when all the people were sleeping and the night was far advanced, they set

off in their cart to the place where the body of their murdered leader lay. To their surprise and great relief they found it quite unguarded. The sentinels had found their task so unpleasant that they had taken themselves off. 'The Sikh has lain here for several days,' they argued, 'and none of his people have attempted to recover the body. It is not likely they will come now.'

Reverently the old carter and his son lifted the body of Teg Bahadur into the cart, carefully covering it up with their own coats. Then, moved by the same thought, they faced each other silently.

Someone would have to stay and take the place of the corpse, for when the sentinels returned and found it gone the alarm would be given and every road to Delhi searched. For a few moments neither man spoke; then the son burst forth, saying, 'I will stay. My father, let me take the place of our holy guru.'

'Nay, my son,' replied the old man, 'you are young; all life is before you; it may be that you can strike a blow for our holy faith. My eyes are dim, my arm is no longer strong, but I can at least die in a way befitting one of our race.' The son, however, begged to be allowed to remain. 'I am one of three sons' he said; 'if I die, there are still two to fight; but who will take your place? You are the head of the house and we look to you for everything.'

'Away with you' commanded the old Sikh. 'See, the dawn will soon break; the guards may return at any minute. Bear that sacred corpse to Amritsar, where it may receive all the holy rites

of our religion.' Still the son lingered, trying to persuade his father to let him make the sacrifice. Then the old Sikh drew his dagger and, calling out in a low triumphant tone, 'Victory to the Guru', he plunged the blade into his own heart and fell on the very spot where the holy corpse had lain; and on the humble carter's face was a smile of peace and joy, as if in dying for his faith he had entered into eternal bliss.

Sorrowfully his son left him, after he had disguised the body as that of the guru; then he set off with his holy burden to Amritsar, where it was interred with all honour.

So great was the admiration of Govind for the heroic conduct of the old carter and his son that he rewarded their family by enrolling them as 'Singhs,' and giving them a high position as fighting Sikhs. To this day their descendants fight for the Empire under the title of Muzhabi Sikhs. Well may they be proud of the name earned for them by one of the bravest acts of self-sacrifice that go to make up the Golden Deeds of India.

IX

THE FAITHFUL HEART

In 1866 a terrible famine occurred in Orissa. At that time famine relief was not carried out in the far-reaching and systematic way that it is to-day; consequently the death roll in Orissa was very heavy and the people underwent terrible hardships and privations.

Not only the very poor suffered, but even families of moderate means were ruined by the high prices that prevailed for food, which had to be brought from great distances.

WE have read of the Golden Deeds performed by princes and warriors, deeds of high courage made dear to the people of India in many a song or tale. The hero of this story was not a prince nor yet the son of a prince, but only a poor Hindu boy, yet his bare feet might well have left tracks of gold where they trod, and had some poet woven his story into beautiful verses, then the name of little Sanatan might have glowed amongst those whose noble deeds are sung to this day.

A three years' famine gripped the district of Orissa: not a blade of grass remained on the sun-baked ground, not a bird sang in the leafless trees; all, all had withered away, and yet no rain came.

The starving people cried aloud for food, and gazed hopelessly at the brassy sky. The oxen

died by the road-side and even the pariah dogs could not scrape a meal off the rubbish heaps.

Sanatan lived with his father, mother, and little brother in a small village. Their scrap of land had yielded no grain for two seasons; their small stock of cattle had been sold to buy food in the bazaar.

For months the father and mother had eaten but one mouthful of food each day, giving their share to the two boys, who suffered more keenly from the pangs of hunger than their parents.

One day the father said to the mother, 'I eat too much; if I were not here, there would be my portion for our boys'. At his words the poor woman burst into tears. 'What would be our fate' she said 'if you left us? It is I who am in the way. Take our children to the city; you may find a sale for my ornaments there; with the money you receive buy food for our boys.'

Her husband, however, would not hear of deserting her, but he sold all the family jewellery for a few rupees, and with the money bought a little rice. It was very little, for the stock of the district was exhausted and the time had nearly come when even money could not purchase grain.

Then Sanatan thought, 'Our parents do not know how to get the next meal for us; I must go out and try to find some food.' Without saying a word to his father or his mother, he set out alone and all the long hot day sought for leaves and wild fruits; but there was nothing, and he returned home faint with hunger and fatigue.

Seeing his exhaustion, his mother offered him a little rice in a bowl, begging him to eat what there was, but the brave boy shook his head, saying, 'I have done well enough to-day; to-morrow, if I find nothing to eat in the jungle, I will take what you offer me.' His mother turned away to hide her tears, for she knew well that her son had not touched a scrap of food that day; but the younger boy cried out so pitifully for something to allay his hunger, that she gave him Sanatan's portion, and the elder boy was content that this should be so.

Every day at dawn he left the house, and sometimes he found a few leaves, or a blade of grass at the foot of a tree, where it had escaped the blazing sun. On these fortunate occasions he would run back to his mother with a smiling face, bringing the best of his find to her and saying that he himself had eaten.

And so the terrible days passed by; at last the father became so weak from starvation that he could not walk more than a few yards without growing faint and dizzy.

Realising that he could not help his loved ones, and that even the few grains of rice he ate were more than could be spared, he called his wife to him and said, 'I am going on a little journey; have no fear; all will be well with me.'

The poor woman had no words with which to answer him, for she knew of what journey he spoke, the one from which no one ever comes back; she knew too that the end was near for all of them unless relief came speedily.

Next morning the father crawled away from the little home in which his forefathers had lived and where he himself had been so happy before the bad days came.

Once only he looked back and fervently invoked a blessing on his little family. Then he dragged himself towards the jungle. He was never seen again, and this sorrow, added to the terrible privations his wife was undergoing, sapped her little remaining strength. The day soon came when she was unable to rise from her bed. Then Sanatan took upon himself the whole responsibility of providing for her as well as for his younger brother, tending the sick woman gently and skilfully and continuing his daily search for food to keep her alive.

Sometimes he would walk miles and come back empty-handed; on other occasions he would persuade someone to give him a few grains of rice or a handful of flour. Then he would speed joyfully back and display his find to his mother, and she would rally a little and smile gratefully.

But these brighter moments grew scarcer, and whole days would pass without any of the family tasting a morsel of food.

Thousands of people were starving, and Sanatan did not know where to obtain a bit of food to keep the spark of life alight in his mother's body.

He himself was so thin that his bones showed quite clearly under the stretched skin, and his little brother wailed constantly from hunger.

Yet Sanatan's brave spirit was not crushed, and although his legs would hardly carry him, he still made long journeys, in the desperate hope that he would find some kind person who would spare him a few mouthfuls of food.

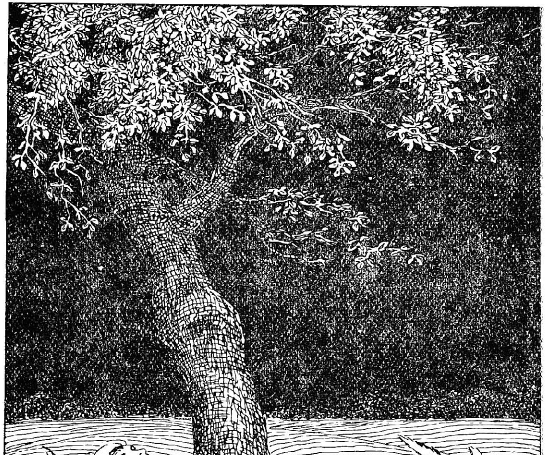
One day he had travelled many miles, painfully dragging himself over the burning roads, until it seemed as if he could go no further. 'I will rest a little' he thought, and he lay down beneath a tree.

Now it chanced that near by a woman was preparing for her family a little rice, which she had been able to buy in a neighbouring village where the stock was not quite exhausted.

As Sanatan smelt the cooking food his hunger became so acute that he cried aloud, 'Kind people, spare me a little food; I have not eaten for three days.' Filled with compassion, the good woman took some of the rice out of the pot and brought it to the starving boy, expecting him to devour it ravenously, but, thanking her for her charity, he staggered to his feet, and, wrapping the rice round with a bit of cloth torn from his ragged turban, he turned to go home.

He was many miles from his own village, but the thought of his dying mother urged him on. For what seemed hours, he struggled along scarcely conscious of where he was, almost too exhausted to feel the pain of his burning blistered feet, which left deep tracks in the thick white dust of the road.

Once or twice he felt an overwhelming temptation to eat a morsel of the food he carried,



SANATAN SANK DOWN BY THE ROADSIDE

but the thought of his mother's need prevented him. Night came on, he was still far from home, his head felt light and dizzy, every step required a separate effort. Stars came out in the sky, but the air was very hot and still.

Sanatan sank down by the roadside. 'I will stay here for a few moments' he thought. As he lay on his back, he kept his eyes fixed on one bright particular star, and somehow he felt as if his father was very near him; he could almost hear his voice. Then everything grew confused; he felt no fatigue or hunger, only a great wish to sleep. Carefully he concealed the tiny bundle of rice in the bosom of his shirt and then, with a little sigh, closed his tired eyes, murmuring, 'Soon I will arise and go home'.

Next morning an old man, walking from one village to another, found a little boy lying by the road-side. Kneeling beside him, he chafed the cold hands and opened the ragged shirt to see if the little heart still beat.

Thus he discovered the package of rice, and wondered how the boy had come to die of starvation when he had food with him.

There was no one to tell of the gallant child-heart now stilled, no one to praise little Sanatan who had died by the way rather than eat one grain of the rice he was carrying to his mother, but surely no feat of princely bravery deserves a golden record more than the heroic sacrifice of this humble Indian boy.

X

A FIGHTER OF THE FLOOD

On the south bank of the sacred river Tapti, about fourteen miles from the sea, stands the historic city of Surat. It was there that the hero of our story, a Parsi, performed his exploit.

To the enlightened and progressive community of the Parsis Western India owes an admitted debt; it is an ill wind, says the proverb, that blows nobody any good. and so we may say that the cold wind of Mahomedan persecution, which drove the Zoroastrians from Persia and wafted them to Gujarat, was for India no ill wind at all. This was about A.D. 650. Five hundred years later we find them making their way to Surat.

In commercial development the Parsis, wherever they have been, have always played a leading part, and by the time the Portuguese arrived in India Surat was one of the most important trading centres of the land. Bombay in those days was scarcely more than a collection of fishermen's huts.

But as Bombay grew by degrees to be the wealthy and important city that she is to-day, so Surat declined; she is still, however, a fairly large city, full of memories of former commercial greatness and of the early contact of Western races with India.

LIKE all towns built on the banks of a river, Surat is subject to floods, and in 1882 there had been the highest on record up to that date. The inhabitants of the city naturally expected that they would not suffer from such another for many years.

The very next year they were to be bitterly undeceived, for the monsoon of 1883 broke with such heavy rain that by the evening of Monday, 2nd of July, the unfortunate citizens realised that their houses and perhaps their very lives were in danger.

The water rose so suddenly that the people living in the low-lying parts were warned to remove as quickly as possible to higher ground. Shortly after midnight the flood rose to the point of 'Danger', and within a couple of hours more the water topped the highest known flood level and passed the record of the year before. The rain was still falling in torrents and the water rising steadily.

Between the river and the city lay the Mecca Khari Dam. It was feared that the pressure of the water, which had exceeded the safety limit, would prove too much for it, and that the Mecca Bridge might also be swept away; if this happened, the rushing waters would sweep away thousands of helpless people and demolish hundreds of homes.

Luckily the dam and the other protective works stood the strain and did not collapse, but the anxiety of those in authority was acute, for every hour as the water rose they expected to hear the great roar of the river as it raced over the broken dam. There was no rest or sleep for anyone. At three a.m. the secretary of the municipality and the executive engineer visited the dam, examined all the works, and discussed the situation. All round them the rising waters swirled,

the flood seemed to be coming from every side, and they concluded that it was impossible to prevent it from entering the city. All that could be done was to make such arrangements as were possible to send boats to rescue the unfortunate inhabitants of the low-lying parts of the city.

At five a.m. on the 3rd the flood, which had everywhere overflowed the river-bank, poured into the city in a torrent, sweeping before it everything that came in its way. It was difficult even for a man on horseback to pass through it. And then, under the strain, the Kankra Khari (Waracha Cut) collapsed, and a great volume of water poured through the openings in the railway embankment and rushed into the hapless city. Almost at once three-quarters of the city was under water, the depth of which in some places was as much as twenty feet, and ten thousand houses were inundated. Buildings crashed down on all sides ; houses, gates, railings, and lamp-posts were all swept away. The roads were torn up, and great damage to public and private property resulted, amounting to many lakhs of rupees.

The great city wall, which had stood firm for over three hundred years, was thrown down in several places, the assistant judge's court collapsed, the wall of the public park was washed away, and the whole of the park silted up to a depth of several feet. Animals from the menagerie, maddened with terror, jumped into the main stream of the flood and were drowned. But although three-quarters of the city lay under water for two days, and though so many houses

had tumbled down, not one human life was lost.

That no man, woman, or child of Surat was drowned in that terrible time reflects the greatest credit on the efforts made by the municipal officers and by those who so willingly played their part in the work of rescue. But of all the brave deeds performed that day one exploit stands out supreme in its resourceful gallantry.

At the time of the flood, Dadabhai Dorabji Pandia, a Parsi of about thirty-one years of age, was pursuing his profession of a teacher of gymnastics and swimming. In these admirable exercises he had many pupils, and he seems to have done a good deal to foster the love of physical culture among the young Parsis of his time. He was himself a powerful and skilful swimmer, and, even before the feat of bravery which we are going to narrate, he had saved many lives from drowning.

Through the whole day of the flood he had been at work with the collector, the assistant collector, and the superintendent of police, rescuing people isolated in their houses and conveying them by boat to the safety of the hospital. Untiringly he worked, using his trained strength without ceasing, fetching boat-load after boat-load of the rescued and returning for others. Night fell and still the waters rose. At this time the brave Pandia was in the Nanpura Bazaar; the flood was now at its height, and many people who could not swim were in imminent danger of being swept away by the swirling stream. The

only boat available was then at the house of the superintendent of police, and between the house and the Nanpura Bazaar lay the dark, rushing waters. But Pandia was not afraid. Holding a light in one hand above the water, grasping a stick in his teeth, and steering himself with his other arm, he started to swim across the racing flood.

As when Cassius and Cæsar essayed to swim the flooded Tiber,

> 'The torrent roared, and he did buffet it
> With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
> And stemming it with heart of controversy.'

With anxious eyes and in painful suspense those whom he was risking his life to save watched the flickering light slowly creeping on amid the darkness across the waste of waters. Often it seemed to pause and make no headway, and a ghastly fear would grip the hearts of the watchers that the currents were too swift and that the gallant swimmer would be swept away. But though at times the litttle light seemed to stop and even drift away, it was moving slowly on, every yard of its progress won by unceasing struggle.

The skill and stamina acquired by long days of practice now met with their reward, but even these qualities would not have prevailed had they not been doubly reinforced by the noble courage and unfailing strength of purpose that actuated the heart of the brave Parsi. In spite of the strong currents, the inky darkness, and his own fatigue, he at last reached the superintendent's house, found the boat, and rowed it back to

Nanpura Bazaar. With what grateful feelings of relief must those menaced people have heard the stroke of the oars which told them that their rescuer was on the way to them! One by one they were placed in the boat and rowed to safety. Again and again Pandia returned, until one hundred and six people were saved and none were left to perish. By degrees the flood subsided, but the gallant exploit of the brave swimmer was not forgotten. A special report was made by the superintendent of police, and the gallant Pandia was presented with a purse of money and a watch as a token of the admiration felt by the citizens of Surat for his courage, endurance, and skill.

And we may hope that if Surat is ever visited by a flood as serious as that of 1883, the memory of Dadabhai Dorabji Pandia will still be alive to inspire others to the work of rescue and to Deeds as Golden as his.

XI

A BRAVE JEMADAR

Those who have read the history of the Great War will remember how critical for the fate of the Empire and of the world was the second battle of Ypres. Had the Germans broken the Allied line sufficiently to advance to the Channel ports and to Paris—and at times they seemed to come near doing so—it is certain that the whole future course of the War would have been profoundly changed.

In the first battle of Ypres, in October, 1914, the British had been outnumbered by three to one; in the second, in April, 1915, the numbers were more equal, but the unexpected use of poison gas gave the Germans a great advantage, till protective masks could be made and issued to our troops.

AMONG the Mussulman soldiers that come from the North-West Frontier to join the Indian army none are better natural fighters than the Afridis. Brought up for centuries in a barren and lawless country, where each man's living and each man's safety depend on the strength of his own right arm or the keenness of his eye and the steadiness of his hand behind his rifle, the Afridis have in their blood the fighting qualities of fierce hill races.

To advance to the attack on a German trench in the face of bullet, shell, and gas involves a greater strain than skirmishing amid the wild hills of the Khyber Pass; but courage, coolness, and resource are qualities that are the same, whatever the conditions under which they are displayed.

How the wild valour of the hill men could adapt itself to modern war, the story of Jemadar Mir Dast will show.

The second battle of Ypres had just begun. The Lahore Division was hurriedly flung into the fight, at a crisis which Sir John French himself has declared to have been as grave as that of the first battle of that name. By the unexpected use of their new and horrible weapon of asphyxiating gas the Germans had succeeded in breaking the Allied line and making a dangerous advance. The Lahore Division had done splendidly at Neuve Chapelle; it had now marched thirty miles on bad roads and was almost at once thrown into the fight. It upheld its reputation nobly, but it suffered severely in so doing.

It was at two p.m. on the afternoon of Monday, the 26th of April, that the Lahore Division was ordered to join the French in their attack on the German line.

In the centre of the Ferozepore Brigade, with the 129th Baluchis on their right, and the Connaught Rangers on their left, were the 57th Rifles, the unit to which Jemadar Mir Dast was now attached, and which was commanded by Major Willans. No regiment had done better than the 57th, which had made its mark in the first battle of Ypres; it was now to be subjected to a still severer trial.

The ground to be crossed before the German line could be reached was almost as unfavourable for an attack as it could well be. It afforded no cover at all, while about half-way there was a

slight ridge, and the last part sloped upwards to the German trenches.

For nearly an hour the German line was heavily bombarded; as soon as the firing started the troops advanced, to get as far as they could before their own guns would have to cease fire.

In spite of our bombardment, the German fire was extremely heavy and the attacking troops had to advance under a regular hail of bullet and shell.

Officers and men fell fast, and many a gallant deed was performed that afternoon. The 57th suffered so heavily that before long it had only two British officers, a captain and a lieutenant, left to lead it.

British, French, and Indian units had inevitably become mixed up, but they would have been able to hold the ground which they had gained had the Germans not resorted once again to their horrible weapon of poison gas.

It was about half-past two when the yellow fumes began to rise from the German trenches, and as the wind was blowing from them to us, the attacking troops were soon involved in the poisonous clouds.

The whole line felt the effects, but the Ferozepore Brigade and the French felt it worst of all.

To be exposed to the effects of poison gas without being able to strike a blow or to protect himself in any way is a terrible experience for the bravest man. To see his comrades writhing on the ground in agony, which will slowly kill, is enough to make the stoutest quail.

All that our men could do was to cover their faces with wet handkerchiefs or *pagris*; some were unable to improvise even this poor protection, and could only press their faces against the parapet of the trench. It is no wonder that French, British, and Indian staggered back confused and choking, leaving the ground covered with the dying. But there were some heroes whom nothing could dismay or subdue. In such men lives

'the unconquerable will,
And courage never to submit or yield;
And what is else not to be overcome.'

Among these was Jemadar Mir Dast. For many of his comrades the strain had been too great, for it was almost beyond human endurance. The air was thick with horrible and poisonous fumes. Every now and then a great German shell would burst near by, shattering part of the trench and sending a great column of earth and smoke into the air. The rattle of rifle and machine-gun fire was continuous. From this inferno of appalling noise and fearful death many had fallen back. But Mir Dast would not leave his trench without orders. Setting his teeth and grasping his rifle more firmly, he remained there, determined to hold out or die. Men who had been gassed before they could protect themselves were lying dead or groaning in agony around him. But a few had not been too badly gassed to fight. They were at once rallied by this leader of men and, inspired by his example, they determined to hold the trench till their last cartridge was exhausted. Then, if they still lived, they

would meet the German attack hand to hand with their bayonets. Here and there a man fell, but the rest, under Mir Dast's leadership, maintained a steady and effective fire, amid the murky air and the crash of shells. Slowly the minutes crept by. Would the Germans attempt to rush the trench and overwhelm the handful of its gallant defenders? If so, they were ready to sell their lives dearly. But the enemy seem to have felt that these men were a band of heroes who might repulse almost any attack. So they contented themselves with keeping up a heavy fire, and when Mir Dast now and then took a momentary glimpse at the opposing line, he saw no sign of an advance. At last the shades of evening began to fall. When the light had failed, orders to retire at length reached Mir Dast. Then, and then only, did he withdraw, at the head of the survivors whom he had inspired to so gallant a defence.

He still had no thought for his own safety. On the way back he collected and brought in men from other trenches, some of them unconscious, who otherwise must have perished miserably. Nor was this all; his day's work was not yet finished. There were wounded men still left to be brought in, and Mir Dast was to the fore in rescue. But the work was highly dangerous. Occasional German shells where still falling, and, though accurate marksmanship was impossible in the dusk, bursts of rifle and machine-gun fire made it risky to cross the ground between the opposing lines. And so it happened that during this last piece of gallant work Mir Dast received a wound himself.

It was not the first occasion on which he had displayed his devoted courage. In the Mohmand Campaign he had won the Indian Order of Merit; he was now to be the fourth Indian soldier to win the V.C.

Nor was this the only mark of distinction conferred upon him. Before leaving Europe he was presented to the great Lord Kitchener, and the History of the Indian Corps in France contains a photograph of that interesting meeting.

He was, of course, promoted to the rank of Subadar, and is now a pensioner. When last we heard of him, in February, 1921, he had come to Rawalpindi to be presented to H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught at a garden party, to which many pensioned Indian officers were invited.

Long may he live to enjoy the honours that have fallen to him, and long may the memory of his Golden Deed be kept bright in the hearts of his countrymen!

XIII

A GALLANT GURKHA

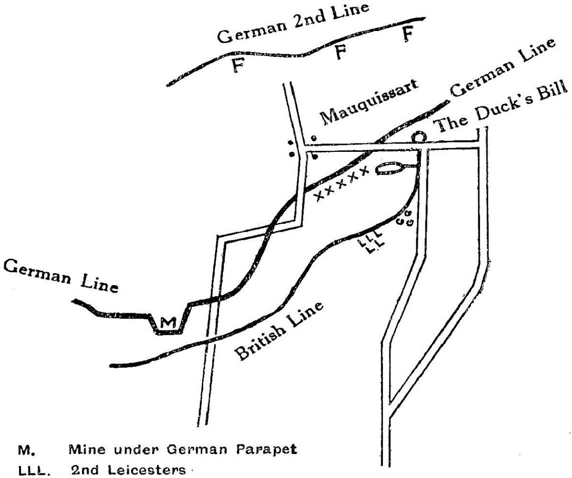
In the south of India the Gurkhas are seldom seen and are to many only a name. They are, of course, the sturdy little hillmen of Nepal, an independent State on the slopes of the Himalaya. In the height, build, and appearance of its men, who are not unlike the Japanese, a Gurkha regiment is curiously uniform. Many who have never seen a Gurkha, have heard of his kukri, a heavy curved knife with an almost razor-like edge, which he can use not only for delicate and peaceful purposes, but with deadly effect in fighting at close quarters. Between the Scotch Highlanders and the Gurkhas there has long been a tradition of special military friendship.

As one would expect from the inhabitants of a mountainous and densely-wooded country like Nepal, the Gurkhas are at their best in mountain or jungle fighting, and trench warfare on the plains of France must have appeared to them—apart from the European winter—the least pleasant of all forms of war.

How well the Gurkha could adapt himself to these new surroundings the story of Kulbir Thapa will show.

IN September, 1915, was fought the great engagement known as the battle of Loos. The main attack on the German lines was to be in Champagne; at a number of other points on the line attacks were to be made to prevent the Germans sending reinforcements. Among these 'holding engagements', as they are termed, was an attack by the Indian Corps (in which, as usual, was a proportion of British troops), in the neighbourhood of Neuve Chapelle. The most important

of the 'objectives', from the point of view of our story, was to attack the German line between Sunken Road and Winchester Road, and to estab-



M. Mine under German Parapet
LLL. 2nd Leicesters
GGG. 2/3 Gurkha Rifles
XXX. German wire left uncut by bombardment
FF. Furthest points reached in the attack

The 2/3 Gurkhas at the Battle of Loos

lish the British line along the road from Mauquissart to the 'Duck's Bill', a projecting trench held by the 3rd Londons. A glance at the map accompanying will make the situation clear.

The assault was to be preceded by a four days' artillery bombardment of the enemy's lines, assisted, of course, by rifle and machine-gun fire. Shortly before the assault itself, a mine, charged with a ton of gun-cotton, was to be exploded on the left of the attack under the parapet of the enemy's trench. Two minutes later, if the wind was favourable, gas (which the Germans had at last forced us to employ) was to be liberated for the first time, and, lastly, a smoke barrage, under cover of which the troops might advance for some way unobserved, was to be formed at each end of the attacking line.

On September 21st the bombardment began; for four days and nights the guns roared and the gunners toiled unceasingly to smash the German trenches, and cut the wire entanglements which guarded them. On the evening of the 24th the wire along the German line had been broken up, except in one section on the right. It was this uncut wire that was afterwards responsible for the loss of many gallant lives.

On the evening of the 23rd rain came on, and by the 25th there was a foot of water in the trenches—a handicap to an attacking force.

At 4.40 a.m. on the 25th a German bomb landed in the 'Duck's Bill', and blew off the heads of some of the gas cylinders (which were ready to be used against the enemy). A number of men were badly 'gassed', but earth was at once thrown on the cylinders, and, as the wind was unfavourable, it was decided to liberate no more gas.

At 5.48 a.m. the mine under the salient (projecting part) of the German trench on the left went off with a terrific explosion, carrying with it much of the salient. Two seconds later there commenced an intense bombardment, which lasted for ten minutes, designed to shake the morale of the enemy and render him less ready to repel the actual assault. The smoke barrage had now been started, and, at 6 a.m. exactly, the assaulting infantry advanced amid a fog of smoke. On the right were the Londons holding the Duck's Bill. Just to the left were the 2/3 Gurkhas, and next to them were the 2nd Leicesters. The Gurkhas had received a warning of uncut wire, and advanced on a narrow front into the haze of smoke. The distance to the German trenches was about 200 yards. For about half-way the smoke protected them, but then the Germans saw them and a hail of bullets was poured into them. Through the air, reeking with gas and smoke, they dashed on, many being shot down as they charged. The survivors reached the wire—it was not cut! Many a gallant soldier, British and Indian, fell there, trying in vain to find a way through. Against uncut wire and machine-guns no human strength and courage can avail. The few that still survived threw themselves down and took what poor cover the ground afforded.

There were some surprising adventures. One British officer was knocked into a small shell hole, in which he found a wounded Gurkha. There, within a few yards of the enemy, they had to lie, with their legs exposed to the enemy

fire, for the Germans often shot at the wounded. Each was wounded again several times. When night fell they started to crawl back, and the officer just managed to reach the British line.

Incredible as it may seem, one British officer and a handful of men, by a combination of courage and luck, had forced their way through the wire and charged the German trench. As far as can now be ascertained, they were all killed except one man. That man was Kulbir Thapa. Wounded as he was, he made his way through the German trench. Behind it he found a wounded man of the Leicesters. This man gallantly urged Kulbir Thapa to leave him to his fate and try to save himself, but the staunch little Gurkha had no mind to leave a wounded comrade to the mercy of the foe, and remained with him for the rest of that day and all through the night.

The next morning there was a thick mist, under cover of which Kulbir managed to get the wounded man through the network of wire. Several times he seemed on the point of being discovered by the Germans, but each time the moment of danger passed, and he eventually placed his companion in a shell hole, where he was comparatively safe. For most men such a nerve-wracking exploit, in which at any moment he might have been observed and shot at sight, would have been enough. It was not enough for Kulbir. Between the German wire and the shell hole, lying in what is called 'no man's land', he had observed two wounded Gurkhas. He went and brought them into safety, one after the other.

It was now broad daylight, and Kulbir would be exposed to the enemy's fire if he returned again. The chances seemed heavily against him, but he went back for the British soldier, carried him back most of the way, and successfully escaped the German bullets. It was a wonderful example of bravery thrice repeated, and of fortune favouring the brave.

Many of the brave men who won the V.C. were killed either before or after the award had been made. Kulbir Thapa, however, recovered from his wound and, after a short spell of service in Egypt, returned to India. Let us hope that for many years he will be a living example and proof that, when duty and honour call, the courage of the Era of Chivalry, or of the Golden Age of legend, can be reproduced to-day.

XIV

SONS OF THE SEA

'KHUB DEKH-TA HAI' chants the lascar. Good watch is kept, so that the ship may come safely through the perils of the deep, and, when his well-loved vessel has been brought safely into port, you may see him, clad in his bright blue costume and red cap, a well-knit active fellow, keen of eye and cheery, as most sailors are.

Much has been written about the soldiers of India, of their history and achievements; but because India is so large, and the distance between her seas so great, there are many of her people who have never seen an Indian sailor.

And yet India has a long and interesting sea history; from the earliest time of which we have record, she sent men down to the sea in ships laden with precious freights of silks and spices, bound for distant foreign shores.

In the *Rig-Veda* mention is made of those who sail out into the open main, braving the perils of the deep, 'where there is no support, and nothing to rest or cling to'.

Nearly five thousand years ago there was a sea trade between Western India and Mesopotamia. It is not easy for our imagination to travel back into this dim past, but we may picture the little ships with their bold captains and their

cargoes of spices, silks, cottons, and precious stones, steering by the coast and the stars up the waters of the Persian Gulf. In the ruins of a palace and of a temple built by the great Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, have been found beams of cedar and teak from India. If one of these beams could only speak, what secrets of the past it could tell, what perils and adventures on the deep!

Everybody has heard of the Buddhist books called *Jatakas*. In one of these, entitled the *Baveru Jataka*, we read how Indian merchants carried peacocks to Baveru, or Babylon, perhaps 2,500 years ago.

What would we not give now for the diary of one of these traders of old!

In the caves of Kanheri, on the island of Salsette, near Bombay, is the sculptured picture of a shipwreck at sea. Two sailors are praying for help from heaven, and the god Padmapani is sending two rescuers to their aid. In this sculpture, which is more than 2,000 years old and may be the oldest Indian picture in stone of a sea-going ship, we may get the hint of a far-off golden deed speaking to us across the centuries. That Indian shipping was well established at that time we know from the fact that the Emperor Chandragupta, who reigned not long after Alexander the Great, had created a Board of Admiralty.

Many of our readers have visited the caves of Ajanta, which contain in their paintings a striking record of old Indian enterprise by sea.

We can see in those old paintings, which were made about A.D. 600, the reflection not only

of the sea-borne trade of India in those days, but of the naval power of some of the dynasties of the time. There is a detailed picture of a sea-going ship, another of the royal barge or pleasure-boat, with the king seated under a canopy, an oarsman in the bows, and a helmsman steering from a kind of ladder with a long oar, such as the Vikings of the North were using about the same time.

And the story of the conquest of Ceylon by Vijaya Sinha, in the middle of the fifth century, is told in a remarkable picture in the same cave. Amid many other details we see the cavalrymen with their lances, mounted on their horses, and elephants with their drivers on their necks and the archers on their backs, all being conveyed in large boats propelled by oars.

In later times, of which the history is known to us in greater detail, the story of Indian enterprise and achievement by sea can be traced without a break. In ordinary histories it is, of course, overshadowed by the story of what happened by land, but it is there all the while, and if it could be told in detail it would make a vivid and romantic tale.

At the time when in Europe Queen Elizabeth was establishing a supremacy at sea over the Spaniards, Akbar was embarking on a far-sighted naval policy.

His fleet had to contend not only with Hindu rivals, but with the daring pirate kings of Arakan, whose name was one of terror in the Bay of Bengal. These pirates included both Maggs (as the Arakanese were termed) and Feringis

(or foreigners), and a contemporary Persian account tells us how they used to capture both Hindus and Mahomedans and sell them to Dutch, English, and French merchants in the ports of the Deccan. 'Their guns are beyond number,' says the same account, 'their armada exceeds the waves of the sea.' And their ships were said to be constructed of a wood so hard that it could not be pierced by a cannon ball. This, of course, was the famous Indian teak, well seasoned, which, later on, was discovered to be more durable than English oak, so that some ships for the British Navy were actually built in Bombay.

The seventeenth century was noteworthy for the rise of Maratha power under Shivaji, and, though the main achievements of that great captain were by land, he knew the value of sea power and established a navy which took part in a great number of minor operations.

Shivaji's navy fought many battles with the Siddi fleet, but on the whole they had the worst of it.

The Siddi chief of Janjira was the ruler of a little Abyssinian colony which controlled a good stretch of the west coast, and his fleet was under the orders, first of Bijapur, and then of the Mogul Emperor.

With the Siddis, the Moguls, and the English, Shivaji's fleet had many an exciting encounter.

But it was under Angria, in the eighteenth century that Maratha naval power reached its zenith. The Angrias, of course, were mainly pirates, but they were daring seamen and fighters

and inflicted heavy losses on European shipping on the west coast of India. They became such a menace that the Peshwa combined with the English to try and root them out. But it was not until Clive and Admiral Watson made their expedition against the Angrian stronghold of Gheriah that the power of these freebooters of the sea was broken.

Many a lascar of to-day is descended from some sturdy sailor of Angria's fleet.

The history of the Indian Navy, created and maintained by the old East India Company, is a story of excellent work done in policing the seas of India as far as the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. An exciting book of seafaring adventure and fighting could be made out of the records of this Navy, manned by the ancestors of many of the Indian sailors who behaved with such gallantry in the Great War.

We therefore see that the lascar of to-day has behind him centuries of seafaring tradition, and what this tradition has meant to him we can judge when we read the following stories of courage and devotion to duty which these men have displayed, both in peace and in war.

This act of gallantry took place at Fao, in the Persian Gulf, in 1913:

Sheik Mohidin, tindal of stokers, stood on the deck of the R.I.M.S. 'Lawrence', watching the recharging of a gas buoy with carbide. These buoys are surmounted by an iron cage containing the light, the bars of which are too close together to admit a man's body, so that access

to the top of the buoy itself is only to be had through a manhole, pierced in a broad iron band which encircles the cage.

Through this manhole a canvas chute is led into the cage, and thence, through another manhole, into the body of the buoy, in order to fill the buoy with carbide.

It is necessary for one man to sit inside the cage to tend the flow of carbide, and to see that the chute does not 'kink'. Not a very pleasant place to spend one's time in, but someone has to do it.

As the recharging of the buoy was in progress there was suddenly a terrific explosion; the officers superintending the work were hurled off their feet and thrown some distance away, and the whole buoy was wrapped in a sheet of flame, which continued to pour out of it to a height of ten feet.

And inside, trapped by the flames, was the unfortunate lascar, his only means of escape, through the manhole, blocked by the canvas chute, which itself was burning.

Realising the whole situation in a flash, and with no thought of the personal danger he ran, only filled with a passionate desire to do something towards the release of the poor shrieking wretch imprisoned in the buoy, Sheik Mohidin climbed down the side of the ship, and along the boom to which the burning buoy was made fast.

Amid the cheers and shouts of the onlookers he jumped into the buoy, heedless of the cruel flames, which licked his hands and face, and tore

the burning remnants of the chute from the manhole.

Then, never for a minute losing his presence of mind, he dragged the almost unconscious lascar out from among the flames, and put him into the water on the weather side of the buoy, holding him there until a boat came to his relief.

The lascar soon recovered; the gallant rescuer was the hero of the hour and eventually was awarded the Albert Medal of the 2nd class for his conspicuous bravery.

In the Great War, as most our readers will remember, Indian seamen rendered much useful and gallant service, and a number of them received the Distinguished Service Medal. The brief stories that follow are only instances of the many brave acts that stand to the credit of India's sons of the sea.

There are few severer tests of a man's courage than his capacity for keeping cool and observing the discipline of parade when advancing under heavy fire to which he is unable to reply.

When it is the case of a boat's crew approaching the shore to make a landing on an open beach, the situation becomes still more trying. On land, the soldier at least has the satisfaction of marching or doubling. It is a nerve-racking ordeal to have to sit still in a boat, while the enemy marksmen are trying to put a bullet into one, or when a shell from a field gun may at any moment put an end to the boat and its crew.

Such courage was repeatedly shown by Indian sailors. Thus during the operations at Dilwar, in

the Persian Gulf, Sheikh Ali Balkhoon, petty officer of lascars, was in charge of the ship's cutter. A landing had to be made in face of the enemy's fire. As the boat neared the land, the fire grew extremely heavy. Men were being killed or wounded fast.

It was one of those moments when, if the officer in charge does not display courage, coolness, and command, men may become panicky, and the attack or the landing may break down. But Sheikh Ali was equal to the occasion. He seemed himself to be unconscious of the heavy fire and of the ping of the bullets around him. The mere sight of his cool courage steadied his men. A few words of confident exhortation, a few clear commands were all that were needed. The crisis was passed, and the landing was achieved.

To be under fire in a boat is trying enough for a combatant, but he, at any rate, may have a chance of coming to grips with the foe.

From the engineers, who all the time are targets for the enemy, and have no hope of actual fighting to spur them on, such an ordeal demands the courage of endurance pushed to the utmost limits. It was not found lacking in Sheikh Yakoob, an engine-driver of the second class.

During the operations on the Shat-al-Arab, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, as well as at the battle of Kurna and the advance to Amara in 1914-15, and while towing boats with landing parties at Dilwar, he ' behaved ', in the words of the official report, ' with great bravery and coolness under fire *at all times* while in charge of the engines of a steam cutter '.

Think of the sum of resolution and control covered by those few words, of the continued and repeated strain on mind and body.

The cutter is under fire—bullets are flattening themselves against the shield. At any moment Sheikh Yakoob's brain may be pierced, or his arm shattered. But he is not thinking of that. He is thinking of his duty to his engines. Suppose a bullet cut that pipe or smashed that rod! At times a vision of his wife and children in far-off India rises before his eye, and for a moment the thought of never seeing them again almost unnerves him. But the next moment he is his cool self once more, and his engines take up all his thoughts. It is a case of fortune favouring the brave, for in spite of all the odds against him he comes through repeated perils with his life.

He, too, richly deserves the reward which his valour has earned.

India in these days is thinking and talking of having a navy of her own. If her ships are manned by men like Sheik Mohidin, Sheikh Ali Balkhoon, and Sheikh Yakoob, and commanded by officers worthy of such men, it will not be long before they rank with ships of the British Navy.

. . . .

We have now passed, as it were, through the long corridor of the centuries, and stand on the threshold of to-day. In every age we have found some picture of courage or devotion which has defied the hand of time and formed a link in a golden chain.

Some of the last links have been forged by men who are still alive. In the India of the

future, which is even now coming into being, there will be scope, in private and public life, for the courage and devotion of her sons and daughters. It is for them to prove themselves worthy of the past, and to add to the chain fresh links of Golden Deeds.

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